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Official Records

Chairman: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Introductory statements

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning, the First Committee, in accordance with its programme of work and timetable, will begin its general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items. Before I call upon the first speaker in the general debate, I shall make a brief statement in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee.

I should like to begin by thanking everybody for their support, which enabled me to accept the chairmanship of this important Committee, a Committee to which Mexico — through some of its most outstanding and dedicated diplomats — has devoted such great effort, and from which we are expecting such significant results. The particularly complex international situation, which presents new challenges and new threats, makes us aware of the urgent need to make progress on a significant number of pending disarmament and international security issues.

I urge the Committee first to identify specific and practical means for achieving the noble objectives to which we have committed ourselves; we cannot limit ourselves merely to the repetition of lofty words. Eliminating weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons; halting their proliferation and preventing their acquisition or use by terrorists; and reducing the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons: those are some of the urgent tasks to which the Committee must contribute.

Fifty-eight years have elapsed since the General Assembly adopted its first resolution calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons that could be used for mass destruction. However, today we still find ourselves in a world in which tens of thousands of such weapons remain — indeed, in a world in which some still consider such weapons to be a viable option. Even worse, the risks of proliferation have considerably increased over the past few years. I am thinking of both horizontal and vertical proliferation. We must recognize once and for all the disastrous consequences that the use of such weapons — either in a war between States or by a terrorist group — could have on international peace and security. Let us strengthen our virtually universal consensus for the total elimination of these weapons.

Let us also recognize, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on 21 September, that

> "It is by strengthening and implementing disarmament treaties, including their verification provisions, that we can best defend ourselves against the proliferation — and potential use — of weapons of mass destruction." (*A/59/PV.3, p. 3*)

He appealed for respect for and strengthening of the rule of law, and that appeal is particularly important and relevant for the work of the First Committee.

Acknowledging the commitments made in the fields of disarmament and arms control — and above

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all fulfilling them — is indispensable for carrying out initiatives that will enable us to meet the new challenges. The legitimacy and viability of the Committee's activities are directly linked to our capacity to enhance transparency, ensure the implementation of agreements, strengthen accountability and promote understanding and public support. Moreover, we must always remember that the principles and norms enshrined in the Charter and in multilateral disarmament treaties must be applied in a universal manner without double standards or selectivity.

The challenges we will be facing will test the capacity of the entire network of institutions which together make up the multilateral disarmament and arms control machinery, which, paradoxically, has long been in a state of crisis. The United Nations Disarmament Commission for many years has been unable to reach consensus on substantive issues. This year it was not even able to agree on an agenda. For its part, the Conference on Disarmament recently concluded its 2004 session without having agreed on its programme of work, a situation that has been repeated every year for the past seven years.

Given that situation, and taking advantage of its universal membership and broad mandate, the First Committee, above all, has the duty to reaffirm the urgent need to make progress on substantive issues and, above all, to identify specific initiatives that will enable to advance the security interests of all States.

Let us begin by adapting our methods of work and creating an environment more conducive to dialogue and cooperation, while not forgetting that the raison d'être of the multilateral system is to build and protect a universal political and normative environment that gives pride of place to shared interests based on the premise that collective action is indispensable to guarantee international peace and security, even more so in a global world.

For my part I am convinced that if we engage in the gradual implementation of particular reforms and if we succeed in creating a more constructive environment, then we will be successful in dealing with all the complex issues before us and will be able to make progress. This is a historic responsibility given the great danger inherent in the present international environment.

Before continuing our work for this morning, I should like to express my great satisfaction at having the support of a woman from the Caribbean as Secretary of the Committee. Ms. Cheryl Stoute is not only the first woman in this post but she is also a well known and highly valued expert in the field of disarmament. Her assistance will be fundamental to our work.

I now have the honour to call on Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, to make an introductory statement.

Mr. Abe (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the opportunity to address the members of the Committee, many of whom have been friends and colleagues for many years, as the Committee commences work on its challenging agenda. I should like to extend my congratulations to the Chairman on his selection to guide the work of the Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and pledge the full support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. We look forward to assisting their efforts to ensure that this will be a productive session.

Many years ago, former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld referred to the General Assembly's disarmament resolutions as "hardy perennials" of the United Nations system — "perennial" because of their annual reappearance, and "hardy" because of their proven ability to survive in very difficult environments. While those resolutions are non-binding, they contribute to a broader process of developing norms to guide the conduct of Member States. Sometimes they identify important goals that must be pursued. Sometimes they offer standards that can be used in assessing the actions of States in achieving specific goals. In some cases they put forward initiatives to inform the general public about some dimensions of international peace and security, such as the reporting of statistics on conventional arms and military expenditures.

(*spoke in English*)

It is clearly not the duty of this Committee alone to solve all the world's international security challenges. It is, however, its solemn responsibility to clarify, as best it can, the goals that members together seek to pursue, to insist upon concrete practical steps to achieve them, to assess progress along the way, to identify the need for new norms where they do not now exist and to ensure that the Committee's own procedures are adequate to those tasks.

The good attendance today from national delegations and the abiding interest of civil society groups testify to the importance of the work of the Committee. Members would not see such interest if their work had fallen into an empty ritual, a danger that the Committee must constantly seek to avoid. I am confident that, under the guidance of the Chairman, the Committee will once again succeed in avoiding that danger.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing this particular session of the Committee is whether it will be able to reconcile two often-competing objectives. On the one hand, the Committee must be realistic — both in the goals it chooses and in the means selected to achieve them. The Committee must also adapt to the changing reality of the world. On the other hand, it must recognize that its actions are based on profound commitments to basic principles that are not subject to renegotiation every year, including, most fundamentally, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. I believe it is indeed possible for the Committee to conduct its deliberations and to adopt its resolutions in a manner that reconciles those most compelling demands. It is not only possible, but essential — for the discovery and implementation of practical steps is the bridge we must cross to achieve our common goals.

As is both customary and appropriate, the Committee will once again consider several draft resolutions dealing with nuclear weapons, without question the deadliest of all weapons of mass destruction. Members should take little comfort in the non-use of such weapons since 1945, for all it would take is one single use to jeopardize the lives of thousands and the entire architecture of international peace and security. Nor should the Committee fall into complacency that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), having been indefinitely extended in 1995, will alone suffice to solve all problems relating to the achievement of its non-proliferation and disarmament goals. I hope that the Committee's deliberations will reflect the fundamental reality that both non-proliferation and disarmament must be pursued together in a mutually reinforcing manner. The wider the agreement on this basic issue, the greater the likelihood of reaching widespread agreement on the relevant nuclear-weapon initiatives before the Committee.

While biological and chemical weapons have been outlawed by multilateral treaties, they too will remain an important subject on the agenda, *inter alia* because of their potentially massive and indiscriminate effects, especially upon defenceless civilians. The real challenge here is to bring those treaties closer to universality and to secure compliance.

They may not look as horrible as weapons of mass destruction, but conventional weapons — including small arms and light weapons — continue each year to kill thousands upon thousands of people, both military and civilian. The illicit sale or use of such weapons has frustrated the enforcement of arms embargoes mandated by the Security Council. They have prolonged and aggravated civil conflicts and have had terrible secondary and tertiary effects on economic and social development, trade and the environment. I am pleased that the Committee is taking up such issues and I look forward to the deliberations that lie ahead.

The Department for Disarmament Affairs has assisted many member States in their work both inside and outside the Committee. We also seek to assist efforts at the regional level through the work of our three regional centres: in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific. I will be consulting with many delegations in the weeks ahead about the difficult financial challenges facing those centres — especially the critical situation facing the Regional Centre in Lomé, Togo — and I hope that the directors of all three centres will have the opportunity to address the Committee during its thematic debate.

Though the work ahead for the Committee will be at times difficult, I hope the spirit of mutual cooperation will provide its most basic inspiration. Members of the Committee, please accept my best wishes for a productive session.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Abe for his important statement, for the kind words he addressed to the Committee officers — and for his use of Spanish, from which I can see that he will support the work of the Chair through direct contact. I know that we can count on his continued support.

Agenda items 57 to 72

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before beginning the general debate I should like to remind delegations that rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly states that

> "Congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation — after all the officers of the Committee have been elected".

That has already taken place, and I thank Ambassador Jarmo Sareva of Finland for the kind words he addressed to me and to the other members of the Bureau.

I should also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Committee, sincerely to thank Ambassador Sareva for his efforts and dedication in chairing the Committee at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which yielded very encouraging results.

I should also like to remind members that during the organizational meeting last week I proposed that, when speaking in their national capacity, delegations should limit their statements to five minutes and, when speaking on behalf of a group of States, to 10 minutes.

If we abide by those rules — the first binding and the second voluntary — we would save time that we could make use of later by devoting it to interactive discussions and thematic meetings.

Mr. Berruga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The relationship between disarmament and the international strategy to combat terrorism and the paralysis of the multilateral disarmament machinery are the most salient dimensions of the current international context with a direct and substantive impact on our deliberations at this session of the First Committee. It is clear that over the past three years the war on terrorism has been linked in an unprecedented manner to the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agenda, in particular in the area of weapons of mass destruction and, more specifically, in the nuclear field. In line with what Under-Secretary-General Abe just said, this dynamic should not prompt us to make an artificial choice among our goals in each of those areas.

During the public meeting of the Security Council prior to the adoption of Council resolution 1540 (2004) (see S/PV.4950) it was stated that the time had come for concerted, effective and determined action by the international community to prevent non-State actors from having access to weapons of mass destruction. Mexico said that the most effective and lasting way to face the danger of those weapons would be to proceed to their total elimination through multilaterally negotiated disarmament agreements.

However, the international anti-terrorism strategy tends to emphasize non-proliferation to the detriment of disarmament objectives and, in particular, of the obligations of nuclear States in the disarmament field. Moreover, we note an increase in the number of declarative but not legally binding initiatives and instruments negotiated by a limited number of States and then offered to the rest of the international community for accession — but without any opportunity to enrich them. Here, Mexico believes that the advancement of a genuine and non-discriminatory non-proliferation regime requires more inclusive formulas, which, by ensuring the universality of proposals, would yield better results.

In the view of Mexico, the success of the anti-terrorism strategy as it relates to the dangerous front of weapons of mass destruction hinges on the fulfilment of disarmament objectives. Only in that way can the objectives in both areas be truly complementary.

An important and increasingly relevant point of contact for these two fields lies in the fostering of a culture of peace and non-violence through education for disarmament and non-proliferation. That would make today's citizens and future generations aware of the costs of an armed world and of the risks posed by nuclear weapons. In the meantime, the multilateral disarmament machinery is paralysed — at least on four fronts.

First, in seven years of stagnation, the Conference on Disarmament has still been unable to begin its substantive work. During its presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, Mexico promoted the convening of informal plenary meetings in order to try to find points of agreement, but we have not been able to overcome this lack of agreement. Likewise, the Disarmament Commission has been unable to adopt its programme of work for 2004.

Secondly, the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been unable to make substantive recommendations for the 2005 Review Conference. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force, and nuclear weapons continue to be produced and improved despite the numerous appeals made to halt all further development of nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, the repeal of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and the pursuit of national and theatre-of-operations anti-missile defence programmes, as well as the open search for new technologies and for new weapons that can be deployed and used in outer space, make the potential for implementing agreements in this field even more remote, and eliminate prospects for additional reductions of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

Fourthly, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) continues to lack a verification mechanism that would ensure its full implementation, which in the present context is a very dangerous omission.

In this regard, my delegation believes it necessary to reaffirm that disarmament plays a central role in the system of collective security. Here, the implementation of obligations undertaken multilaterally is the best way to avoid the emergence of doctrines that would endorse unilateral decisions and so-called preventive actions. For that reason, Mexico calls on all parties to the NPT, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to honour their obligations and to participate in next May's Review Conference in a constructive spirit, reaffirming that the elimination of nuclear weapons would be the best guarantee against the dangers of proliferation.

With the support of the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco — which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region — and as a contribution to the 2005 Conference, it is my pleasure to announce that Mexico is offering to host a conference of States parties to and signatories of treaties creating nuclear-weapon-free zones, with the objective of encouraging better coordination among them, ensuring scrupulous respect for the legal regimes created by those zones and supporting the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other areas of the world.

Our societies are increasingly demanding a safer international environment, which requires immediate action in the area of multilateral diplomacy. The problems are clear, as must be the commitment to solve them. We must recognize that disarmament is the most effective antidote to proliferation. With the same clarity we will be discussing ideas to ensure the implementation of obligations undertaken.

Before concluding this first statement from the delegation of Mexico I wish to encourage you, Sir, to create an atmosphere more conducive to dialogue and collaboration in the sensitive areas of disarmament and international security. Our efforts during this session must be aimed at revitalizing the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Ms. McDonald (New Zealand): We are delighted to see you, Mr. Chairman, leading the work of the First Committee. You bring considerable expertise and experience to that role and we are confident that you will lead the Committee to a productive outcome.

At this time when the Secretary-General himself has found it necessary to express his concerns for the rule of law, and when we are facing the possibility that weapons of mass destruction may fall into non-State hands, it is more important than ever for us to agree to work towards strengthened legally binding multilateral agreements with verification provisions that are as strong as necessary to provide the confidence that will finally allow us to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Disarmament — complete, verifiable and irreversible — remains New Zealand's goal. In that regard, New Zealand is proud to work towards nuclear disarmament with the other members of the New Agenda Coalition. We strongly support the statement that is to be made by Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Currently, much international energy is being concentrated on various non-proliferation initiatives. These certainly have a contribution to make in curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and New Zealand has, over the past year, demonstrated its support by: contributing NZ$1 million to the Group of Eight Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, a practical programme addressing problems that pose a real risk to global security; endorsing the statement of interdiction principles as set out under the Proliferation Security Initiative; and participating in initiatives to tighten export controls on items that could contribute to weapons of mass destruction, including through support of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). It is important, however, that such control should not impede knowledge or technology flows to countries that can demonstrate full treaty compliance. Moreover, last March, we sponsored, in partnership with the International Peace Academy, a conference entitled

"Weapons of mass destruction and the United Nations: diverse threats and collective responses".

Those practical, yet essentially ad hoc measures and activities are, however, in our view in no way a substitute for the development of strong and effective multilateral disarmament instruments. In New Zealand's view the most effective non-proliferation moves we could make collectively would be to ensure and enhance compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in all its aspects including nuclear disarmament, to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force and to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe that the foundation of any multilateral disarmament treaty, if it is to be effective, must be a robust and comprehensive verification mechanism.

This year New Zealand began its first two-year term on the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The credibility of the verification regime is central to the effectiveness of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and New Zealand will pay attention to issues such as the methodology for inspection selection, possibilities for increased inspection of other chemical production facilities and the use of the challenge inspection mechanism.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is a key organization in the context of verification and confidence-building, working with member States to safeguard and secure nuclear materials for exclusively peaceful purposes. The past couple of years, during which New Zealand has served as a member of the Agency's Board of Governors, have been particularly challenging for the Agency. Among the difficult issues that the Board has dealt with recently, New Zealand remains concerned about Iran's nuclear programme and the questions relating to verification, that remain outstanding. In this context North Korea's nuclear programme is also of concern. Those two examples illustrate the key importance of the Agency's work in contributing to the effective functioning of the non-proliferation regime. New Zealand congratulates the Director General and his staff on the professional manner in which they have undertaken their work.

Finally, New Zealand would like to register its thanks and appreciation for the tireless and often unpaid work being done by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in keeping information and debate flowing about these issues and for keeping up the pressure on Governments to take practical steps towards disarmament. New Zealand has now set aside annual funding to assist NGOs in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/57/124) which was presented to the Committee in 2002. It is vital that an informed civil society take an active interest in what we are doing in these closed committee rooms. After all, we are talking about how to control and eliminate weapons that could destroy the world.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area (EEA), and the countries of the stabilization and association process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

In the spirit of reform and revitalization of the First Committee, the European Union (EU) in this statement will focus on the broader dimension of security, non-proliferation and disarmament issues. The EU will elaborate on its position on the specific issues in more detail during the thematic debates.

As of May this year, the European Union has been enlarged to 25 member States. A larger EU contributes to prosperity, stability and security for all Europeans — now, some 450 million people share the benefits of an internal market, of increasingly converging views on justice and home affairs and of a common foreign and security policy. A European security strategy and a European Union strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have been adopted in the past year. Within the framework of the First Committee, the EU considers the Union's enlargement an important development, because in our view strengthening cooperation across borders and across issues is the best answer to the challenges the world faces.

Over the past decade, no region in the world has been untouched by armed conflict. Most of these conflicts have been within States rather than between them. More than 4 million people have died in wars, 90 per cent of them civilians. More than 18 million people have left their homes as a result of conflict. In many parts of the world, poverty and disease cause untold suffering and give rise to pressing security concerns. Half the world's population lives on less than €2 a day. AIDS is now one of the most devastating pandemics in human history and contributes to the breakdown of societies. New diseases can spread rapidly and become global threats. In many cases, economic failure is linked to political problems and violent conflict.

The world today is a globalized world of increasingly open borders. Flows of trade and investment, the development of technology and the spread of democracy have brought freedom and prosperity to many people. On the other hand, there is an important downside. These developments have increased the scope for hostile non-State groups to play a threatening part in international affairs. In this globalized world, so dependent on an interconnected infrastructure in transport, energy, information, health and other fields, the logistic possibilities of such groups to cause harm have increased. The world today forces us all to think globally, across borders and across issues. So in thinking about the policies we could develop in the field of security, disarmament and non-proliferation, we should also take a broad approach. I should therefore like to touch upon the worldwide threats we identify, the strategic objectives all of us could share to counter those threats, and what that means for our policy decisions.

What are the key threats to our security environment, wherever our countries are located? The EU identifies five, which, more than ever, tend to overlap.

First, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is potentially the greatest threat to global security. International treaty regimes and export control arrangements are in place to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and have probably helped to counter that spread. We have now, however, entered a new and dangerous period that raises the possibility of a weapons-of-mass-destruction arms race and of acquisition by non-State actors. Proliferation is driven by a small number of countries and individuals but presents a real threat through the spread of technology and information and because proliferating countries may help one another. Alarmingly, these developments take place outside the current control regimes. The possession of nuclear weapons by States outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and non-compliance with the Treaty's provisions by States parties to the Treaty, undermine non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Furthermore, advances in biological sciences may increase the potency of biological weapons in years to come. Attacks with chemical and radiological materials are also a serious possibility. The spread of missile technology adds a further serious element of instability.

A second key threat is terrorism. Increasingly, terrorist movements are well resourced, are connected by electronic networks, and are willing to use any means to achieve their ends, from small arms and light weapons, including man-portable air-defence systems, to, possibly, weapons of mass destruction. The most recent wave of terrorism is global in its scope. We are particularly worried about a scenario in which terrorist groups acquire weapons of mass destruction. In that event, a small group would be able to inflict damage on a scale previously possible only for States and armies.

The third threat is regional conflicts. Over the past decades, regional conflicts have brought about a devastating scourge of landmines, a huge proliferation of small arms and increased opportunities for organized crime. Regional conflicts also increase the risk of extremism and terrorism and can lead to State failure. Regional insecurity can fuel the demand for weapons of mass destruction.

The fourth is State failure. Civil conflict and bad governance, such as corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability, corrode States from within. In some cases, that has brought about the collapse of State institutions. The collapse of the State can be associated with obvious threats such as organized crime, the uncontrolled influx of small arms and terrorism. They form a breeding ground for extremism and terrorism. State failure is an alarming phenomenon that undermines global governance and adds to regional instability.

And, fifthly, organized crime has an important external dimension: cross-border trafficking in drugs, women, illegal migrants and weapons. It can have links with terrorism. Such criminal activities are often associated with weak or failing States. In extreme cases, organized crime can come to dominate the State. Another dimension of organized crime that merits further attention is the growth in maritime piracy.

Taking those different elements together — the availability of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism committed to maximum violence, regional conflicts, the weakening of the State system and organized crime — any one of us could be confronted with a very radical threat indeed. Again, we can only draw the conclusion that more than ever disarmament and non-proliferation should not be viewed as a standalone issue. They are fully interlinked with other questions of security and stability at the global and regional levels. That is an important lesson for our work in the First Committee.

Let me turn now to the strategic objectives we might share. We live in a world that holds brighter prospects, but also greater threats than we have known. The EU has formulated three strategic objectives for itself: to address the threats; to foster regional security; and to further build an international order based on effective multilateralism. Let me briefly dwell on those three objectives because they are, in our opinion, not limited to Europe. If the threats of today are essentially global, then responses should, to a large extent, be global as well. That is why our strategic objectives could be shared by any country subscribing to our analysis of threats and challenges.

First, all of us should be fundamentally rethinking our way of addressing the threats. The new threats are dynamic. The risk of proliferation grows over time. Left alone, terrorist networks will become ever more dangerous. State failure and organized crime spread if they are neglected.

How are we to stand ready? As discussed earlier, in a globalized world none of the present threats is purely military, nor can any be tackled by purely military means. The European Union is of the firm belief that each response requires a mixture of instruments. A wide range of instruments is available. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start at an early enough stage. Multilateral treaties with effective verification mechanisms remain essential. Other important instruments are: national and internationally coordinated export controls; cooperative threat reduction programmes targeted at support for disarmament; control and security of sensitive materials, facilities and expertise; political and economic levers, including trade development policies; interdiction of illegal procurement activities, including through the Proliferation Security Initiative; and, as a last resort, coercive measures in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

At the same time, the EU will continue to address the root causes of instability, including through pursuing and enhancing its efforts in the areas of political conflicts, development assistance, reduction of poverty and the promotion of human rights.

While all those instruments and policies are necessary, not one is sufficient in itself. We need to strengthen them across the board and deploy those that are most effective in each case. The Security Council should play a central role. That is why the European Union strongly supports Security Council resolution [illegible]40 (2004), adopted last April, which addresses serious concerns about the risk of non-State actors gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. The EU also places particular emphasis on regional security and deems it important that regional solutions be found to regional problems.

On the subject of small arms and light weapons, a regional approach is crucial. Within the framework of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, regional synergies have proven very successful. The same applies in the context of weapons of mass destruction. The best solution to the problem of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is that countries should no longer feel that they need them. Strengthening regional security is an important instrument in achieving that. The EU itself is close to volatile regions, such as the Caucasus and the Balkans, and the EU will pay particular attention to the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation in the Mediterranean area, since security in Europe is so closely linked to security and stability in that region. The EU welcomes the recent positive steps made by Libya in this field. But also in regions further away, the EU is an active partner in peace. It will foster regional security arrangements and regional arms control and disarmament processes worldwide.

The third strategic objective is an international order based on the rule of law and on effective multilateralism. In a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system. The development of a stronger international society, well-functioning international institutions and an effective rule-based international order should be our common objective. The EU is committed to the multilateral treaty system, which provides the legal and normative basis for all non-proliferation efforts. The EU policy is to pursue the implementation and universalization of existing disarmament and non-proliferation norms. To that end, we will pursue the universalization of the NPT, the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreements and additional protocols, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Hague International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. European Union policy is to work towards bans on biological and chemical weapons being declared universally binding rules of international law.

If those are the threats we all face and the strategic objectives we share, what then are the active policies that are needed to counter those dynamic threats and to attain our joint objectives? The EU believes that in the short run it will not be easy to achieve political solutions to all the different problems, fears and ambitions of countries in regions that are the most dangerous in terms of proliferation. Our policy is therefore to prevent, deter, halt and, where possible, eliminate proliferation programmes of concern, while dealing with their underlying causes.

In working to resolve international problems, we should make use of flexible tool kits carrying all the appropriate instruments. We should fully support the United Nations as it responds to threats to international peace and security, including by ensuring effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Most important, we must all realize that there are few, if any, problems we can deal with on our own. The threats I have described are common threats. International cooperation is a necessity. We need to pursue our objectives both through multilateral cooperation in international organizations and through bilateral partnerships.

However, if the multilateral treaty regime is to remain credible, it must be made more effective. Implementation and universalization of the existing disarmament and non-proliferation norms have to be pursued. Non-proliferation and disarmament are mutually reinforcing. The EU will continue to encourage progress towards systematic and progressive efforts towards disarmament.

The EU supports wholeheartedly the objectives laid down in the Non-Proliferation Treaty and is committed to the effective implementation of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the decisions and resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The European Union will place particular emphasis on the policy of reinforcing compliance with the multilateral treaty regime. Such a policy must be geared towards enhancing the detectability of significant violations and strengthening enforcement of the prohibitions and norms established by the multilateral treaty regime, including by providing for criminalization of violations committed under the jurisdiction or control of a State.

The European Union holds the working of the disarmament machinery very dear. In developing our thinking with regard to the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and other relevant bodies, it is important to see them as mutually reinforcing, each with its own added value, the guiding principle here being that the existence of these bodies should not be a goal in itself but only the means to attain better understanding, better cooperation and, in the end, better results in tackling the challenges of our time. If restructuring is needed, we should not shy away from it. The disarmament machinery should serve to pave the way for taking decisions which make the world a safer place for all our citizens. For those decisions we need courage and leadership in all the world's capitals and a strong commitment to cooperate with others.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and Brazil.

We wish to express our satisfaction at seeing a member of our group elected to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session. Please accept, Sir, our warm congratulations and best wishes, as well as our assurance that you can count on our cooperation.

Ever since the Permanent Mechanism of Political Consultation and Coordination — the Rio Group — was created 17 years ago we have tried to adopt concrete measures to preserve peace, strengthen democracy and defend the development of our region, which is one of the most peaceful in the world. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which is now in force, set an example for other regions when it established the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone. The firm position of the Rio Group in defence of international peace and security enables us to encourage the international community to take decisive steps towards a better situation for disarmament and non-proliferation.

In 2005, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will face a complex situation. Besides the difficult regional issues it will debate, measures have recently been adopted outside the framework of the United Nations in the field of non-proliferation that in no way contribute to a constructive debate.

Unfortunately, the outcome of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference have shown how far from consensus are the positions of the groups participating in the NPT. In this negative scenario we need to increase the responsibility of States to find the negotiating spaces that are necessary to comply with the Treaty. The Rio Group believes that keeping the integrity of the NPT is essential for the credibility of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. All commitments must be respected — not merely non-proliferation but also disarmament as such, verification and the inalienable right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The Rio Group reiterates its position in favour of a total ban on nuclear testing and stresses the need for universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including by all nuclear-weapon States. We reiterate that it is necessary to maintain the moratorium on nuclear testing and all other explosions until the Treaty enters into force. The Rio Group hopes that in the near future we will obtain the universality of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Likewise, it will be necessary to create a verification mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention. The Rio Group is convinced that effective multilateralism is the only way to maintain international peace and security and that joint efforts by all States to agree collectively on instruments and mechanisms will enable us to ensure mutual security.

With respect to the Conference on Disarmament, the international community's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Rio Group hopes that it will take up its role once again and respond to challenges in order to face all the substantive issues before it. We also wish to express our support for the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Owing to its deliberative nature, the Commission is the appropriate framework within which to explore possibilities for making progress in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We hope that a consensus will be reached as soon as possible regarding the substantive issues of the agenda so that the Commission can have a fruitful discussion at its next session.

The Rio Group hails the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development and welcomes the fact that it will re-examine this matter in the new international context. The Rio Group renews its commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. In that respect we praise the work and progress of the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Each year, the use of anti-personnel mines causes the loss of thousands of human lives and leaves behind survivors with disabilities. Until they are deactivated, they pose a threat to civilian populations and prevent the agricultural use of fertile lands, hampering regional development and limiting employment possibilities — not to mention the health care and rehabilitation costs resulting from the care of mine victims. This diverts resources that are needed for the development of our peoples. We hope that future generations throughout the world will be able to free themselves from the suffering caused by the scourge of anti-personnel mines. We call on all those States that are not yet parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention — to comply with its provisions and to become parties to it.

We congratulate the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean on its achievements towards the objective of attaining peace and security in the region. The Centre has strengthened its programme of activities by organizing workshops and arms and ammunition destruction events and by disseminating information — all in close collaboration with States of the region, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Rio Group countries welcome the Declaration of San Francisco de Quito on the Establishment and Development of the Andean Zone of Peace, adopted by heads of State of the Andean Community at Quito, Ecuador, on 12 July 2004, within the framework of the fifteenth meeting of the Andean Presidential Council. The establishment of that zone of peace is further proof that the States members of the Rio Group are promoting peaceful coexistence in the region and are developing relations in an environment of peace and freedom.

I wish in conclusion to express the view of the Rio Group on the issue of the revitalization of the First Committee. We believe that in order to improve the Committee's working methods there must, first of all, be mutual confidence and a spirit of cooperation among all member States so that the Committee can become a forum where issues of great importance for international peace and security can be discussed. The main objective of the process of revitalization of the First Committee should be to restore its political role in keeping with the mandates of Articles 11 and 13 of the Charter.

Mr. Traavik (Norway): The First Committee is intended to be a core multilateral venue for addressing security challenges. But clearly, the Committee has not fulfilled its potential. Efforts to make it more effective and politically relevant are long overdue. The ability of the Committee to face the threats posed by international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to deal with other security threats clearly needs to be upgraded.

For that reason, Norway has, as members know, organized two informal workshops on First Committee reform with the participation of countries from all regions. The second of those events was held yesterday. It is encouraging to note growing convergence on the way ahead. A paper outlining our perception of yesterday's proceedings is being distributed in the conference room as I speak.

Of course, other parts of the multilateral arms control machinery also need revitalization. The Conference on Disarmament has essentially remained moribund in recent years. We remain convinced that the Conference on Disarmament could play an important role, and we believe equally that it is high time that we cut through the Gordian knot with which it has been bound.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) reaffirms that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security. Member States have an obligation to implement the resolution. Multilateral cooperation must be enhanced to that end. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is one of the main pillars of the multilateral arms control and non-proliferation architecture but, as we all know, the Treaty is under considerable strain. North Korea's non-compliance is a serious matter. There are also unresolved issues with respect to Iran's nuclear programme. Iran must fully implement the resolution recently adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors and allay justified concerns about its nuclear intentions. The lack of universality of the NPT is yet another challenge. We call for renewed efforts by all States to achieve universal adherence to the Treaty.

We all have an obligation to ensure a positive and balanced outcome of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. That will be possible only if we are able to bridge differences among States parties in a spirit of mutual accommodation. Norway is ready to contribute actively towards that end. The NPT represents a grand bargain between non-proliferation and disarmament. A successful outcome of the Review Conference will be possible only if we manage to avoid a stalemate between the two. At the same time, we must strive to avoid one being held hostage to the other. Hence, there must be progress on nuclear disarmament. It is regrettable that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force. We also need a verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty and we must address the issue of existing stocks.

The Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions is clearly to be seen as part of the implementation of the disarmament obligations agreed upon at the NPT Review Conference four years ago. However, we need additional and irreversible cuts in nuclear arsenals, including in tactical nuclear weapons.

Global treaties can and should be supplemented by less formalized non-proliferation initiatives and partnerships. There must of course be no contradiction between the two, and we must ensure that they are well coordinated. The Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction is clearly a contribution to making the world safer. Norway was the first non-G-8 country to join the Partnership. We remain committed to the Partnership and to mutually beneficial nuclear safety cooperation with neighbouring Russia. Threat reduction is a crucial part of the broader efforts to prevent nuclear terrorism, one of the defining challenges to international security in the twenty-first century.

As a major shipping nation, Norway is determined to prevent Norwegian vessels from being used for purposes related to terrorism. Hence, we attach importance to the Proliferation Security Initiative as a practical means to uphold global non-proliferation commitments. Existing export control regimes must of course be adhered to and further strengthened.

Last year the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) adopted the Protocol on explosive remnants of war. The Protocol should enter into force as soon as possible. The logical next step is to develop an instrument on preventive measures with a view to further reducing the humanitarian risks caused by the use of certain munitions. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is an important multilateral response to a human security risk. It is essential that the Programme of Action be fully implemented and that we get serious about the problem of illicit small arms brokering. Together with the Netherlands, Norway is promoting regional initiatives to get to grips with this problem.

In accordance with your request, Mr. Chairman, I have endeavoured to keep my statement short. But before concluding, let me note how gratified we are at the success of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. We look forward to its first Review Conference and are committed to doing as much as possible to ensure its success.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Please accept, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure you and the other members of the Bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

South Africa shares the concerns regarding the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction not only to individual countries but also to the international community as a whole. However, current endeavours to address those concerns continue to serve narrow interests which paralyse the multilateral forums especially established to address those concerns. Putting into practice the reality that initiatives to protect international peace and security are dependent on the collective participation of the international community therefore continues to elude us. South Africa believes that the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction can be effectively addressed only through the instruments established in the fields of non-proliferation and disarmament. Universal adherence to, full implementation of and compliance with those international agreements on weapons of mass destruction and the complete and early elimination of those weapons will provide us with the only genuine guarantees that they can never be used.

To our disappointment, the activities undertaken by the Conference on Disarmament did not bring us closer to reaching agreement on a programme of work for the Conference. The persistent deadlock and the helplessness it engenders continue to call into question the standing of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. If the Conference continues to demonstrate an inability to commence the required disarmament negotiations, it may become necessary to consider whether a better course of action would not be to suspend the Conference's activities until the adoption by the General Assembly of a consensus resolution or resolutions mandating the commencement of negotiations. Such an approach would create a situation that would avoid the apparently never-ending dispute and deadlock in the Conference on its programme of work.

The list of failures in the period under review does not end with the Conference on Disarmament. Failure to reach agreement on a number of fundamental issues at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) yet another cause for concern. South Africa believes that in order to avoid another deep disappointment in 2005, States parties to the NPT must show flexibility and sensitivity to the genuine concerns and views of others. In that regard South Africa is an original sponsor of the New Agenda Coalition draft resolution on nuclear disarmament that will be submitted for the First Committee's consideration.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has still not entered into force as a consequence of the absence of ratification by States required to do so. South Africa continues to view the Treaty as an important measure to accomplish our common goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is for that reason that South Africa's Foreign Minister participated in the meeting of CTBT supporters held in New York last month and signed the joint ministerial statement on the CTBT which was issued at the conclusion of the meeting.

South Africa is equally concerned at the state of affairs in the United Nations Disarmament Commission and is of the view that the Commission should not be subjected to the same paralysis as the Conference on Disarmament. South Africa urges that the Disarmament Commission should be allowed to work in accordance with its mandate. We stress that any proposals regarding the work of the United Nations disarmament machinery should take into consideration ongoing work on the revitalization of the United Nations.

It was also disappointing that the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All its Aspects was unable to agree on a consensus report. Notwithstanding that failure, South Africa continues to believe that the issue of missiles needs to be collectively addressed through the United Nations. In that connection, South Africa wishes to commend the Chairman of the Panel, Mr. Santiago Irazabal Mourão of Brazil, for his untiring efforts to forge a consensus on the draft report.

South Africa fully recognizes and supports the inalienable right of all States to utilize the atom for peaceful purposes only, in conformity with the rights and obligations contained in the NPT. As agreed in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference

> "... each country's choices and decisions in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be respected without jeopardizing its policies or international cooperation agreements and arrangements for peaceful uses of nuclear energy and its fuel-cycle policies". (*NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II), Article IV and sixth and seventh preambular paragraphs, para. 2*)

South Africa believes that we will find, as a result of recent experience, that existing instruments are not adequate and that the non-proliferation regime needs to be strengthened. This should be addressed collectively within the relevant technically competent and established multilateral institutions. While South Africa fully supports international efforts aimed at maximizing the benefits of nuclear technology applications for peaceful purposes, particularly in the context of accelerating socio-economic development, the sustainability of the peaceful application of nuclear technology remains dependent upon ensuring the safety and security of such programmes. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), through its technical cooperation activities, has the potential to make a substantial contribution to our efforts aimed at accelerating sustainable socio-economic development, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the strategic objectives of the programmes of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

My delegation notes with appreciation the commendable activities of the United Nations in the area of small arms and light weapons. It is for that reason, among others, that South Africa continues to attach great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that regard, as in the past, South Africa and Japan, with Colombia as coordinator, will this year again submit a draft resolution to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We hope that all members will join the consensus on this extremely important and relevant matter.

South Africa believes that strong regional commitments on the issue of anti-personnel mines reinforce national efforts in mine action. We are pleased therefore that the common African position on anti-personnel landmines, adopted here in New York at last month's African Union ministerial meeting, sends a powerful message on Africa's implementation priorities in this field. South Africa believes that the common African position manages, first, to evaluate our achievements in Africa, and, secondly, to recognize the challenges of the next five years. It is critical to addressing those challenges that we intensify our efforts to mobilize resources, to clear mined areas and to assist those who have become victims of those lethal weapons. We continue to believe that these are the true key areas on which the first Review Conference of the States Parties to the anti-personnel mine-ban Convention, to be held in Kenya next month, should focus.

The common African position acknowledges that there are 48 African States parties to the NPT — which emphasizes the degree to which the Convention has been universalized in Africa and further underlines that the NPT has become the continental norm in eradicating anti-personnel mines. Among other things, it also highlights the obligation of African States to meet their stockpile-destruction and mine-clearance deadlines; the need to enhance the assistance provided to mine victims and to provide for their social and economic integration; to promote inter-African cooperation; and to further mobilize the international community in support of the continent's effort.

South Africa also welcomes the decision by the November 2003 Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) to adopt a legally binding instrument on explosive remnants of war, although South Africa would have preferred the instrument to deal not only with post-conflict remedial measures. We wish to reiterate South Africa's understanding that a central element of the obligations of States parties relating to cooperation and assistance is the provision of assistance for the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims of explosive remnants of war. As we approach the forthcoming November 2004 session of the Group of Governmental Experts on this issue, followed by the next Meeting of the States Parties to the CCW, we believe that the one area where we have been making progress is the issue of compliance. South Africa wishes to thank those delegations that have expressed support for its proposal on this issue.

As is the case with other weapons of mass destruction, the possibility that biological weapons could be used remains a source of concern for my delegation. South Africa was therefore honoured to have been able to chair the most recent meeting of experts, held in Geneva in July this year to, inter alia, discuss and promote common understanding and effective action on enhancing international capabilities for responding to, investigating and mitigating the effects of cases of the alleged use of biological or toxin weapons or suspicious outbreaks of disease. In my delegation's view, much was achieved in focusing and streamlining the valuable information gained from the presentations and interventions made by a large number of participants.

In conclusion, the First Committee has the responsibility collectively to address concerns related to the threat posed both by weapons of mass destruction and by conventional arms. In fulfilling that responsibility, it is also incumbent upon us to agree collectively on actions that will contribute to and promote international peace and security. That responsibility should guide us in our efforts to revitalize or rationalize the work of the First Committee. Such efforts should be undertaken in an integrated and comprehensive manner in line with the Committee's mandate. In that regard South Africa welcomes the initiative by the President of the General Assembly to streamline the work of the Assembly, and the efforts made by Ambassador Sareva of Finland to strengthen the work of the Committee. My delegation would also recall the proposal that it made in that regard at last year's session.

Mr. Linton (Sweden): I am speaking on behalf of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden, the seven countries which work together in the New Agenda Coalition.

We are pleased to see you, Sir, a distinguished member of the Coalition, presiding over the First Committee. We look forward to working with you in your efforts to make the work of the Committee more dynamic and effective.

Today, 13 years after the end of the cold war, the number of nuclear weapons still amounts to tens of thousands deployed or in storage, and we are faced with the danger of proliferation. If the nuclear-weapon States continue to treat nuclear weapons as a security enhancer, there is a real danger that other States will start pondering whether nuclear weapons would not be a security enhancer also for them. We also face the risk that terrorists could acquire such weapons. That is why we are more than ever convinced that nuclear disarmament is imperative to international peace and security.

Current events reinforce our basic belief that the only real guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Without nuclear disarmament we run the risk of a new nuclear arms race. Non-proliferation is vital, but it is not sufficient.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a legally binding agreement which cannot be complied with "à la carte", relies on a fine balance among its three pillars: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and the right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The core of the Treaty is that non-nuclear-weapon States will not develop nuclear weapons, in return for which the nuclear-weapon States will reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is accorded to all. If the NPT is to stand the test of time it must be implemented in its entirety.

In 1995 and 2000 that pivotal bargain was further elaborated. In 2000, the nuclear Powers gave an unequivocal undertaking to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals, and all parties adopted by consensus a practical plan for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition spearheaded efforts to achieve that result. But today we are increasingly concerned about the state of affairs. The commitments made in 1995 and 2000 must be upheld. Walking away from some of them puts the others in jeopardy.

The NPT has yet to be made universal. We continue to call on the three States outside the Treaty — India, Israel and Pakistan — to adhere to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States. They should also put their nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and bring additional protocols into force. That three countries continue to stand outside the NPT undermines international efforts to achieve nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force. It is particularly important that the 11 States whose ratification is a condition for its entry into force adhere to the Treaty without further delay. It is particularly disturbing that the United States has withdrawn its support for the Treaty and that China is delaying its ratification. We call upon the United States to reconsider its approach and upon China to accelerate its process.

Thousands of nuclear weapons have yet to be eliminated. The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty between Russia and the United States is a step in the right direction but it does not require the destruction of those weapons and does not have any verification provisions. The process is neither irreversible nor transparent, and it is by no account far-reaching enough. What is the rationale in today's world for keeping thousands of weapons on each side, many of which continue to be on high alert? As a first step all weapons should be taken off alert immediately.

The role given to nuclear weapons in security doctrines and policies has yet to diminish. Instead of eliminating nuclear weapons, some nuclear Powers have plans to modernize or develop new kinds or new uses of nuclear weapons or new rationales for them. Some even entertain the notion that nuclear weapons may be used pre-emptively against non-nuclear-weapon States or see them as a possible defence against conventional weapons. That would go against article VI of the NPT and the agreements made in 1995 and 2000. It is critical that any such plans be laid aside immediately.

The zone free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East has yet to be realized. Legally binding security assurances have yet to be given by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States of the NPT. Negotiations on an effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons have yet to begin.

In the light of the forthcoming NPT Review Conference, these and other issues need to be seriously dealt with. It is absolutely essential that all States parties to the NPT comply with the respective commitments under the NPT and that the Treaty be made universal. All States should jointly and effectively raise the guard against the further spread of nuclear weapons and thus prevent both vertical and horizontal proliferation. The nuclear-weapon States must comply with their commitments and pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith. This includes the implementation of the practical steps agreed to in 2000. Only a few months remain before the 2005 NPT Review Conference. The present prospects are not encouraging. Let us use the remaining time, including our work in the First Committee, to make some headway.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): Let me begin by saying how warmly the Australian delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. We look forward to working closely with you over the coming weeks as we have done on many other occasions in the past.

There is a wide recognition that the United Nations needs to become more responsive to the contemporary environment, and we look to the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change for ambitious practical proposals that enhance the capacity of the United Nations to deal with the new security challenges. A priority for Australia is to strengthen the First Committee revitalization process begun last year. If the Committee is to stay relevant and enjoy the support of member States it cannot be seen as operating in a vacuum isolated from current threats and priorities.

Australia is committed to working to ensure that the First Committee delivers tangible security benefits. Australia, together with Turkey and Argentina, will this year introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee on the prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air-defence systems. The use of unauthorized such systems represents a growing security threat, particularly given their potential use by terrorists against civil aviation. We commend the draft resolution to delegations and we hope very strongly for its consensus adoption.

The treaty-based regime for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and working towards their elimination remains essential for global, regional and national security. But there should be no doubt that the regime is under severe challenge. Exposure of the A. Q. Khan proliferation network laid bare a widespread and sophisticated nuclear black market. The six-party talks relating to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are welcome, but as yet there has been little progress on halting North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes. Serious concerns remain about the direction of Iran's nuclear programme, and we hope that Iran will allay these by complying with the September resolution of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors.

In the face of those challenges there should be no question of the urgency of universal application of the IAEA's strengthened safeguards system, the additional protocol. We and many others are of the firm view that the IAEA additional protocol, together with a comprehensive safeguards agreement is the current safeguards standard required of non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. An additional protocol in force should be a condition of nuclear supply by no later than the end of 2005.

Next year's NPT Review Conference will have the task of setting the future nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. Recent events have highlighted the risk of States misusing the NPT's peaceful nuclear energy provisions to acquire the technical basis for a nuclear weapons programme. We strongly support the developing international dialogue on limiting the spread of sensitive nuclear technology. We should be clear this is a question not of reinterpreting the NPT but of ensuring that actions by NPT parties are true to the Treaty's intent and to the global non-proliferation norm.

Like others, we consider that progress on nuclear disarmament is vital to the continued political strength and vitality of the NPT. We do not share the view that improvements to the non-proliferation regime should be linked inextricably to movement on nuclear disarmament. Such an approach puts at risk the essential security benefit which non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT derive from knowing that other non-nuclear-weapon States are not engaged in nuclear-weapons programmes.

It is disappointing that another First Committee session has come and gone without progress on the widely held aspiration for negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Australia believes firmly that to be credible and effective such a treaty should include appropriate verification measures. We stand ready to work with all member States on ways to ensure effective treaty verification. Pending a cut-off treaty, we urge all relevant States to apply a moratorium on production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Australia is committed to efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). With Indonesia, we plan in February 2005 to co-host a regional workshop on national implementation of the BWC.

The link between weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and ballistic missiles is widely acknowledged. Ballistic missile proliferation destabilizes regional and global security and is inimical to progress towards nuclear disarmament. Australia is eager to see the

Hague Code of Conduct firmly established as a universal and viable confidence-building measure to help prevent ballistic missile proliferation.

Exposure of the A. Q. Khan proliferation network illustrated starkly the critical importance of effective national controls over production and export of sensitive technology, materials and know-how, and of international coordination in the application of national laws. Australia regards Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as a timely and appropriate response to the serious threat of WMD and missile proliferation, including the risk of non-State actors acquiring WMDs. We urge all States to act quickly and with determination in implementing that historic resolution.

The destabilizing accumulation, spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons continues to contribute to the breakdown of law and order in many regions. The priority for Australia is to assist regional countries to strengthen small arms control and enforcement capabilities. We were pleased to sponsor, with Japan and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, a small arms and light weapons workshop in Fiji in August this year. We are exploring further opportunities to work with regional countries to promote the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms.

In pursuit of a world free of landmines, Australia continues to work to encourage universal adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Australia calls on those States that have yet to accede to do so as soon as possible and to make a clear commitment not to use anti-personnel mines in the interim.

The past year has provided significant security challenges, but it has also seen some encouraging developments, and it would be wrong not to note them. Libya's very welcome decision to renounce weapons of mass destruction demonstrated that weapons-of-mass-destruction programmes can be given up peacefully through open engagement in ways that improve a State's future security. The Proliferation Security Initiative developed to impede illicit WMD- and missile-related trafficking has evolved rapidly as a valuable reinforcement of, and complement to, the WMD treaties. More than 60 countries have now indicated their support for the Proliferation Security Initiative.

As we conduct our business in the coming weeks, we must keep in mind that resolutions and debate are not ends in themselves. We need to look for ways to reduce the time spent on unproductive formulaic work so that more effort can be directed to areas where we can make a real difference. The Australian delegation looks forward to working constructively with you, Mr. Chairman, and with all other delegations on practical measures to address emerging and existing threats to international security.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. It is a special pleasure to see a distinguished diplomat and friend, Ambassador Alfonso De Alba of Mexico, presiding over the work of this session. Given your professional qualities I have no doubt that you will be successful. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Peru fully supports the statement made by Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group. For that reason, and in strict compliance with the new procedure suggested by the Chair, I will be making a very brief statement.

I will not offer the traditional litany of complaints, albeit justified, of delays in initiatives and negotiations in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation. On the contrary, I wish to describe a positive achievement in the area of disarmament in the Andean region. The Andean Community — composed of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela — has achieved one of the most advanced commitments on limitation, control and transparency with respect to conventional arms, including confidence-building and verification measures. Those commitments were included in an international instrument called the Lima Commitment. I should also like to announce that the Andean Community has adopted its decision 552, which established the Andean Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. That decision is the first subregional instrument adopted to comply with the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action.

All the commitments adopted by the Andean subregion have culminated in the Declaration of San Francisco de Quito on the Establishment and Development of an Andean Peace Area, adopted by Andean Presidents in July 2004. That area includes the land, airspace and territorial waters of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

Based on these subregional developments for the limitation, control and transparency of armaments and confidence-building and verification measures, I express my hope that in 2005 fruitful negotiations will take place, in particular on the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and on the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). I hope also that next year we will reach agreement on the agenda items to be covered by the Disarmament Commission through 2008.

Finally, my delegation is prepared to support any suggestion that will improve our working methods, on the understanding that they will promote the implementation of the resolutions that we adopt here.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): We are meeting at a time when multilateral arms control and disarmament regimes are at a crossroads. Events of the past year have shown that the multilateral system is under increasing stress on multiple fronts and have made it clear that concrete steps are urgently required to preserve and strengthen it in the midst of numerous and persisting dangers. We are also facing unprecedented security threats, which have become a preoccupation of all member States. We remain concerned at the challenges posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), the clandestine transfer of WMD-related technologies and materials, the development of new types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, the weaponization of outer space and the threat posed by terrorists acquiring WMDs. In addition, apprehension concerning nuclear disarmament has been aggravated by the reiteration of strategic doctrines, by the continuing role accorded to nuclear weapons in security policies, by the sole emphasis on non-proliferation to the exclusion of other disarmament measures and by the tendency to consider the issue only in the context of terrorism.

Those concerns call for concerted efforts under multilateral auspices; these offer the only legitimate and lasting solutions. Such an approach is not an option but a necessity for reviving our efforts to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons and to prevent the further erosion of existing multilateral arms-control, non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. Yet we are faced with limited avenues and selective mechanisms to deal with disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

Concerning the non-proliferation regime, despite the high stakes involved, the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), meeting last April in its third session, was unable to agree on a provisional agenda and substantive recommendations, as had been mandated. In that regard Indonesia has long actively supported efforts to further enhance the credibility of the NPT. The 2005 Review Conference offers opportunities to deal effectively with the three pillars of the NPT: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States has continued to elude us. We are afraid that continued delay in achieving that goal might lead to the resumption of testing. The Final Declaration adopted at the Third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, held last year, identified measures to attain that objective. We hope that unilateral moratoriums will continue with a view to pursuing a permanent and legally binding commitment to end nuclear testing in all its aspects.

In spite of delays and difficulties in the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), States are firmly committed to destroying their stockpiles within the time frame established by the Convention. It is particularly gratifying to note that the verification mechanism is being applied in an equitable manner without hampering the economic and technological development of States parties to the CWC.

With regard to biological weapons, we note with disappointment that efforts to formulate measures for preventing and controlling deliberate biological or toxin attacks have not been productive. We hope, however, that the outcome of the annual Meetings of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) will contribute to promoting common understanding, effective action and better implementation of the Convention as we approach the convening of the sixth Review Conference, to be held in 2006.

Positive developments continue in regional disarmament endeavours in some parts of the globe. We are gratified that differences among regional States and between them and external Powers with respect to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia are being resolved to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. As far as the Bangkok Treaty on a South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone is concerned, consultations with nuclear-weapon States are particularly important to seek a mutually satisfactory solution for their accession to the relevant protocol. Indonesia and other signatories to the Treaty remain hopeful that the ongoing efforts with nuclear Powers will be productive in the foreseeable future in the context of strengthening the efficacy of South-East Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

In a renewed effort by the United Nations to address the question of missiles, the Panel of Governmental Experts on Missiles in All Their Aspects was expected to deal with missile-related concerns, explore modalities to combat the danger of proliferation and consider the need for a multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive, transparent and non-discriminatory regime under the auspices of the United Nations. But, unfortunately, given the complexity of the issues, the Group was unable to submit a final report.

My delegation was encouraged by the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development with the objective of keeping military spending at the lowest possible level to meet disarmament and development commitments as enshrined in the Final Document of the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. We welcome the Group's recommendations, including that related to the importance of exercising restraint in military spending with a view to providing resources that can be utilized for social and economic development.

On the issue of small arms and light weapons, the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects at the National, Regional and Global Levels, held last year, facilitated the sharing of national reports and provided a clear picture of the international community's commitment to combating this menace. In that regard, we commend the establishment and work of the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We also look forward to the second Biennial Meeting, to be held in 2005.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction continues to be implemented as many States have abandoned their production. Many stockpiled mines have been destroyed and humanitarian mine action endeavours have registered a substantial increase in many regions of the world. The forthcoming First Review Conference, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December, will provide an opportunity to reassess our achievements and intensify our efforts to mobilize resources leading ultimately to a world that will be free of anti-personnel mines.

In recent years we have witnessed a diminished commitment to multilateral agreements and cooperation. The centrality of multilateralism as the core principle of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation is being undermined. The disarmament machinery is being eroded, which is precipitating a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. The Disarmament Commission has been deadlocked and has been prevented from making substantive proposals on nuclear disarmament and conventional armaments as mandated by General Assembly decision 52/492. That unfortunate situation was repeated once again this year, when the substantive session of the Commission could not take place because differences still existed among member States with regard to determining the agenda items.

The Conference on Disarmament has, for eight years in a row, continued to be paralysed. Despite intense consultations and positive suggestions and initiatives such as the proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors proposal — it remains unable to break the impasse and to agree on a programme of work. Such a prolonged stalemate is symptomatic of a much deeper malaise regarding the role of multilateralism in dealing with disarmament issues.

To add to this dismay and disappointment, questions have been raised about the role and functioning of the First Committee as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament machinery. It is now widely acknowledged that the First Committee should undergo an improvement of its methods of work to further facilitate the international community's endeavours in addressing these issues.

It is a truism that there can be no lasting security without disarmament. The United Nations disarmament machinery cannot afford to allow its agenda to remain suspended. Our disarmament agenda should be revived urgently and the highest priority should be attached to the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

However, we are of the view that any change in the disarmament agenda and the disarmament machinery, including the First Committee as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, should be made in the context of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV), in which all States can participate effectively on a basis of equality. Therefore, we believe that convening SSOD-IV would be both timely and appropriate to address existing and new threats to global security, and to review the existing disarmament agenda and the disarmament machinery as stipulated in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In that way, as in any other special session of the General Assembly, the utility of multilateral disarmament diplomacy through the convening of SSOD-IV will be recognized and the role of a multilateral system based on compromise will be strengthened.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The list of speakers for this meeting has come to an end, but, following the recommendation to keep a rolling list so as to allow us to make efficient use of our time, I shall now call on the next two speakers on my list. I consulted them in advance and they have agreed to speak earlier than scheduled. I thank the delegations of Canada and Japan for their cooperation in that regard.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): Canada values this annual gathering of those engaged in the disarmament and security diplomacy of their respective States as a manifestation of the universal concern and commitment with regard to ensuring a peaceful and secure world. We are aware that major threats to that objective remain and have the potential in some cases to negate overnight the social and economic accomplishments of decades, not to mention being able to exact a toll of human life that is inconceivable. As an international community, we have made great strides in developing common norms of behaviour and in eradicating entire categories of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). We have concluded comprehensive prohibitions on biological and chemical weapons, adopted a new protocol on explosive remnants of war to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) and have been working progressively to reduce and finally eliminate nuclear weapons — the ultimate weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction.

The non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament enterprise is both a complex and a collective one. It is complex in its subject matter and interdependencies, and it is collective in that its effectiveness rests on the ability of all Member States to respect and uphold its obligations. We continue to believe that the best way to deal with contemporary security threats is through multilateral cooperation premised on the rule of law. Legally binding agreements equipped with robust verification provisions that afford a high degree of assurance that any non-compliance will be detected remain in our estimation the preferred means for consolidating advances on the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament front.

Reflecting the importance we ascribe to verification we will be proposing during this session of the First Committee the establishment, in 2006, of a panel of governmental experts to consider and report in the same year on the issue of verification in all its aspects, the 16 verification principles and the appropriate United Nations role therein. We believe that the international community can benefit from the results of such expert reflection, which we would hope would serve to identify practical steps to enhance the role of verification in the conduct of our work.

The disarmament agenda over the next year is a full one, and we are conscious of the wide significance that upcoming events — such as the November Nairobi summit on a mine-free world, which is the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the May 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); and the June 2005 Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons — will have on the subject matter of this Committee's work. In that regard we heartily welcome the reform efforts under way to ensure greater relevance for the work of the First Committee in meshing better its results with the objectives of the principal treaties in the disarmament field and the activities pursuant to them, as well as with other work that is taking place. The universal nature of the First Committee's membership gives a unique status to its discussions and decisions. We need to extract maximum value from its annual session.

In that context, we support in practice, as in word, the desire to confine the general debate to the initial week of the session and to devote the time thus saved to the subject-specific discussions of the thematic debate. We hope that through a structured discussion delegations could address the substance of the chief disarmament-related topics before the Committee and thus help to move us from monologue to dialogue. Issues such as outer space, verification and compliance, a fissile material cut-off treaty, the state of progress in nuclear disarmament, small arms and light weapons and disarmament education — to cite just a few — could benefit from a focused exchange of views that could serve to inform subsequent action by the Committee in terms of draft resolutions or draft decisions.

We would also welcome more interactivity in such sessions and the inclusion of lead-off speakers drawn from the ranks of leading representatives or experts of concerned organizations. In our opinion, such a coherent consideration of prominent thought could yield substantial policy-relevant results and help the Committee to consider forward-looking initiatives, something that is not necessarily obtainable from the frequently formalistic processing of the Committee's draft resolutions.

The Canadian delegation is prepared to contribute actively and substantively to such a revitalized debate and we would urge other delegations to express their views on issues that are of importance to them. In that way, we think, the Committee's deliberations can once again generate the kind of added value that will ensure the First Committee's central place in the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Mr. Mine (Japan): I have decided to speak earlier than scheduled in a spirit of cooperation with the reform of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the printed text of my statement is not yet ready and will be distributed tomorrow, when I hope that delegations will have an opportunity to read it.

I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador De Alba, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that your vast experience and able leadership will guide us through this session, and I assure you of my delegation's full support as you carry out your important task.

The Committee is meeting this year in difficult times. The international community is facing serious challenges in the fields of security, disarmament and non-proliferation. The issues before us include the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; the increasing threat of international terrorism and of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists; the proliferation of nuclear-related technology through Mr. A. Q. Khan's extensive underground nuclear proliferation networks; and compliance problems of individual countries, such as the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Although the international community is facing such challenges, it has also witnessed some progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Examples are: Libya's decision to abandon all its programmes of weapons of mass destruction; the reaffirmation by the United States of its support for the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; a steady increase in the number of countries that have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); an increase in the number of countries that have signed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional protocols, as well as of countries in which the such protocols have come into force; the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation; progress made in the context of the Proliferation Security Initiative; and strengthened non-proliferation efforts in the Asian region. Progress has also been made in the area of small arms and light weapons.

We must work together to find solutions to the problems before us, as well as to make further progress in the disarmament and non-proliferation fields. The next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is scheduled to take place a little more than six months from now, thus giving special significance to the work of this year's First Committee session. The Committee session provides an important opportunity to maintain and strengthen the NPT regime at a time when its viability has been put to the test in the face of various challenges. The successful conclusion of our work here will contribute greatly to the success of next year's Review Conference.

In order for the First Committee to fulfil its role and adequately respond to the changing international security environment, strengthening the functioning of the Committee is an urgent task. General Assembly resolution 58/41, submitted by the United States last year and entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee", was an important step forward in that regard. At this session of the First Committee, we must take last year's discussion one step further towards implementation. Japan is committed to reform of the First Committee and is ready to work closely with the Chair. Japan recently submitted its views on reform to the Secretary-General in accordance with resolution 58/41; we shall explain our position in detail during the thematic discussion.

Japan has been making active diplomatic efforts aimed at realizing a peaceful and safe world free of nuclear weapons at the earliest possible date. Japan again this year will submit a draft resolution entitled "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons", reflecting recent developments and providing practical steps towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Through the draft resolution we wish once again to call on all nuclear countries to move one step further towards the realization of that objective. We look forward to its adoption with the support of an overwhelming majority of member States.

The most realistic, effective means of tackling the various problems faced by the international community today is the strengthening and universalization of existing regimes and their full implementation. Japan considers the international frameworks such as the NPT, the CTBT, IAEA safeguards agreements, IAEA additional protocols, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention to be of the utmost importance as the basis for international disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Japan's basic viewpoint and the ensuing concrete steps in this regard will be explained further during the thematic debate.

In addition to working on the issue of weapons of mass destruction, the international community should take steps to address the problems of small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel landmines as a matter of priority. We have made considerable progress in those areas, but much remains to be done. Japan, together with Colombia and South Africa, has worked to submit a draft resolution on this item, and hopes that it will be adopted by consensus. Disarmament and non-proliferation education is also essential to make progress in these areas. Japan will also present its views on those topics during the thematic debate.

I call upon all member States to make maximum use of this security and disarmament forum to work to strengthen its functioning and to show the international community that the multilateral disarmament and security regime is indeed functioning effectively and efficiently.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again, I thank the representatives of Canada and Japan for their flexibility.

Organization of work

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me recall that I do not intend to convene Committee meetings without a minimum number of speakers. Today we heard 15 statements, including the one made by the Chairman. Yet, even with the flexibility that was shown with regard to scheduling, we still have 30 minutes left that we will not be able to use. The situation would be even more serious if we were to convene tomorrow's meeting when, for instance, there are only six speakers on the list, or the day after tomorrow, when there are only four.

I repeat that my intention is to follow a rolling list of speakers: delegations scheduled to speak on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday should be ready to make their presentations as of tomorrow, Tuesday. If they have a valid reason for not being able to speak, they should let us know so that we can make the necessary adjustments in keeping with the needs of each delegation. With cooperation from delegations and flexibility in interpreting the Chairman's recommendations on making better use of our time, I believe that we will be able to use available resources in a more efficient way.

I also wish to remind members that the list of speakers will be closed on Wednesday, 6 October, at 6 p.m., when we will also need to know how many meetings will be necessary next week to conclude the general debate. In the note I circulated several days ago, I stated that it was my intention to limit to the maximum the general debate in the second week so that we could begin our interactive discussion. In that regard, I hope that we will devote a maximum of two meetings to the general debate next week.

I should also like to remind members that we need to be punctual. This will not be a major issue if we keep within the agreed margin of no more than 15 minutes. I believe that 5 to 10 minutes leeway should be enough. As I did this morning, I will be calling our meetings to order, within that 15-minute margin, as soon as there is a quorum.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/59/PV.3

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

First Committee

3rd meeting

Tuesday, 5 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Organization of work

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we continue the general debate, I should like to make some comments and proposals regarding the organization of our meetings. As I pointed out yesterday, I do not consider it appropriate to convene meetings of the Committee unless there are enough speakers to enable us to make appropriate use of available time and conference services. Despite our having agreed on the desirability of having a rolling list of speakers, the way in which delegations have placed their names on the speakers' list is in line with the practices of the past: they have inscribed their names to speak on specific dates and have not shown great willingness to adapt to the new format of a rolling list.

At present we still have some meetings with only five or six speakers scheduled. I therefore propose to cancel tomorrow's meeting. I propose also that the Secretariat keep two lists, one for delegations willing to make their statements on Thursday or, if additional time is necessary, on Friday, and the second for delegations that absolutely cannot make their statements until next week. The latter list would be for Monday; if additional time is needed, it would continue on Tuesday or even on Wednesday.

There is still time for delegations to add their names to the list. The deadline, as agreed, is tomorrow, Wednesday, 6 October, at 6 p.m. I believe that with the flexibility of two lists we will be able to decide on keeping a rolling list, in two segments, for the remainder of the session. I hope that next session we will be able to have one single rolling list from the very beginning.

What we cannot do is to give a precise date for each presentation. A rolling list, as I understand it, means that if a delegation cannot speak when its turn comes, it is moved to the end of the list unless some kind of understanding can be reached with another delegation to exchange places. Note that I do not intend to shorten the general debate. My intention is to work on the basis of a rolling list so that we can make full use of the time available to the Committee.

I am not asking that this start tomorrow, Wednesday, because I understand that some delegations are still preparing their statements. I know too that some heads of delegation will be arriving at the weekend and will not be able to speak until next week. I understand those concerns, which is why I have proposed this format, which I believe is flexible enough.

May I take it that the members of the Committee agree to this proposal?

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank members for their flexibility and cooperation. I believe that this is something that was needed and will help us to improve our use of time in the Committee. I repeat that my intention is to save time not for the sake of

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

saving time but in order to use it in the best possible way: making progress towards the objectives of the Committee and having a more detailed, specialized, focused discussion on the more complicated issues.

With tomorrow's meeting cancelled, it would be very useful for delegations that are circulating draft resolutions to hold consultations on their texts. That would give small delegations a better opportunity to participate, and would enable us to begin the consultations early, thus broadening support for those draft resolutions. I understand that the Secretariat been trying to find rooms for delegations wishing to hold consultations. I myself will be using tomorrow to hold consultations on the next stages of the work of the Committee.

In that way we will be saving the Organization's resources while we make use of our time to conduct consultations at this early stage.

It will not take all morning to hear all the speakers on the list for today's meeting, so with the concurrence of the Bureau I have invited the Secretary of the Fifth Committee and an official from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts to address the Committee in connection with agenda item 109, "Programme planning". Many members are already acquainted with the problems set before the Committee on Programme and Coordination, so I consider this to be a good opportunity for the Secretary of the Fifth Committee to explain them in greater depth so that we can start our consultations on the matter.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Labbé (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since this is my delegation's first statement at this session, I should like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Committee secretariat.

My delegation associates itself fully with the statement made yesterday by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group. Chile will comment only on the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation: the Hague Code of Conduct. The Hague Code of Conduct is coming to the end of its second year of formal activity. The process of universalization conducted by subscribing States has increased membership to 115 States. The subscribing States come from all political and regional groups, including approximately 50 members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The Code is a political initiative whose purpose is to contribute positively to international security and to strengthen disarmament and arms control mechanisms and treaties. The Code was negotiated in a transparent way and is open to all United Nations Members; its multilateral orientation and aims are thus clear. We are convinced of the risks posed by the indiscriminate proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. That is why we strive for global security through politically binding measures such as restraint in the development, testing and deployment of such missiles, and also through confidence-building and transparency measures that include annual reports and pre-launch notification.

At the same time, subscribing States monitor the assistance given to the space-launch vehicle and ballistic missile programmes that could be associated with the development or acquisition of weapons of mass destruction in contravention of international law. While we recognize, as has been established by General Assembly resolution 51/122 of 13 December 1996, that every State has the right to participate in the benefits of outer space for peaceful purposes, we believe that in the process of reaping such benefits they should not contribute to the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

To attain those goals, subscribing States have made progress in refining their tools and methods. We held our second intersessional meeting in Vienna in June and have accepted Austria's kind offer to host the third regular meeting on 17 and 18 November.

As mandated by the subscribing States, the Chilean Chairman of the Code of Conduct reported to the Secretary-General last November on the activities of the Code. The report (A/58/595) refers, among other things, to a strategy of cooperation with the United Nations system that includes an invitation to the Secretariat to participate as a special observer in the third regular meeting of the subscribing States. The Chairman of the Code is carrying out consultations on submitting a draft resolution to the First Committee this year, with the aim of formalizing a functional link with the United Nations. As we said in 2003, the Code is a political response to the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. But we do not consider it to be the only possible response. As a political undertaking it can coexist with other initiatives and endeavours with the same purpose.

At the end of October, with the cooperation of Italy and Canada, Chile is organizing a regional outreach seminar in Santiago at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences. Its goal is to promote the Code's universalization within the region that began the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The seminar will be one of the last outreach activities organized under the Chilean chairmanship. In November, in musical Vienna, we shall be passing the baton to the Philippines, which has accepted the responsibility of leading the subscribing States in their third year of consolidation.

Finally, I take this opportunity once again to renew our open invitation to all countries that have not yet subscribed to the Code to become a part of our effort: all countries that are genuinely committed to the cause of international peace and security have a place among us.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session of the General Assembly. With your rich experience and outstanding diplomatic skills you will surely guide this session of the Committee to success. I assure you and the other members of the Bureau of the full cooperation and support of the Chinese delegation. I should also like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Jarmo Sareva for his excellent work as Chairman of the Committee at the last session.

In the twenty-first century, economic globalization has been broadening under the influence of the new scientific and technological revolution. Against that backdrop, people-to-people contacts and exchanges are growing increasingly frequent. Dialogue and cooperation among countries are being further enhanced. Regional integration is accelerating. A variety of regional security mechanisms are displaying unprecedented dynamism. Pursuing peace, seeking cooperation and promoting development have become the main themes of our times. However, we are confronted with quite a few potential dangers and challenges on the road to peace and development.

Many ambiguous and unpredictable factors exist in the security arena. Violence, strife and regional conflicts caused by traditional security factors such as ethnic, religious and territorial disputes are far from being eradicated. Non-traditional security threats are on the rise. Terrorist activities are ever more rampant: from New York's World Trade Center to North Ossetia, the alarm bell of terrorist threats has tolled loudly time and again. The danger of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is growing and poses a great threat to peace. Transnational crime, epidemics, environmental pollution and the growing gap between the rich and the poor are all constraints on the development of humankind. Faced with such threats and challenges, no country can manage alone or stand aloof. To build lasting peace and universal security, it is imperative for us to foster a new security concept centred on equality, mutual trust, mutual benefit and cooperation. Whatever difficulties or challenges may lie ahead, we shall follow the path of enhancing mutual trust through dialogue, the negotiated settlement of disputes and promoting development through cooperation.

Multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts are an indispensable part of the international security framework and an important facet of implementing the new security concept. Therefore we are duty-bound to promote the multilateral arms control and disarmament process and improve the international non-proliferation machinery on the basis of the universal participation of all countries on an equal footing.

Currently we are seeing a mixed picture in the international non-proliferation field. On the one hand, international consensus on non-proliferation has been further enhanced and positive progress has been made. Libya has renounced its weapons of mass destruction and has joined the international non-proliferation regime. Nuclear issues related to both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran have been put on track for a political solution. The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) further exemplifies international cooperation and resolve on non-proliferation matters.

We are also confronted with a number of new challenges. With the expansion of globalization and new developments in science and technology, traditional export control mechanisms are inadequate to cope with increasingly sophisticated covert proliferation activities. The exposure of the international nuclear smuggling network demonstrated that the original country-targeted non-proliferation norms were obviously fraught with defects. The risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists is a real threat and needs to be seriously addressed. Some countries and international organizations have come up with new proposals to strengthen multilateral non-proliferation regimes, particularly the nuclear non-proliferation regime. China supports all efforts to bolster the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to strengthen the safeguards and verification role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to bridge the gaps in current regimes through multilateral cooperation. We are ready for discussions with all parties concerned in an open-minded and serious manner.

The complexity of non-proliferation issues calls for a comprehensive approach addressing both the symptoms and the root causes. In that regard China advocates the following. First, we should strive to promote common security for all countries so as to eliminate the motivation to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Secondly, we should address proliferation issues through cooperation and dialogue and using political and diplomatic means. Thirdly, we should vigorously promote multilateralism and strive to improve the existing international non-proliferation regimes. Fourthly, we should ensure the impartiality, rationality and legality of non-proliferation measures. And fifthly, we should maintain a balance between non-proliferation and peaceful uses: it takes both dams and dredges to counter floods. Similarly, it is important to guarantee the right to the peaceful uses of science and technology — so long as the goal of non-proliferation is ensured.

In recent years China has made fruitful efforts to strengthen export controls. We have put in place a comprehensive and effective export control system. The system has adopted international standards and practices, such as a licensing system and end-user certification, list control and the catchall principle. The principles, scope and practices of our export controls are basically identical to international standards. Efforts have also been made to improve the relevant support mechanisms for export controls. We have set up an inter-agency emergency coordination mechanism, a unique export registration system and a technical expert panel on export controls. We have developed a custom harmonized system (HS) code for controlling items. In addition, the Government has taken a variety of measures to enhance our export control regulations and policies, as well as awareness within industry. Most important of all, we have all along been rigorous in law enforcement. Violations of laws and regulations have been investigated and the punitive measures made public. China attaches importance to international cooperation in the area of export controls. We have been actively developing relations with the multilateral export control mechanisms and engaging in close exchanges and cooperation on export controls with other countries. We have joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group and are willing to join the Missile Technology Control Regime. China is also willing to continue dialogue and cooperation with mechanisms such as the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement and with other countries so we can all draw upon one another's experience and improve export controls.

While strengthening international non-proliferation efforts, we should not neglect the importance of advancing the process of arms control and disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. China advocates the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons and never shies away from its responsibilities with respect to nuclear disarmament. China has undertaken unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or against nuclear-weapon-free zones. China urges all nuclear-weapon States to make the same commitment and to conclude a legally binding international instrument to that end. In the meantime, we call upon the countries bearing special responsibility for nuclear disarmament to further substantially and irreversibly reduce their nuclear arsenals, thus creating favourable conditions for complete nuclear disarmament.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is of milestone significance for promoting nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. China firmly supports the CTBT and remains committed to the moratorium on nuclear tests. The Chinese Government wishes to see the entry into force of the CTBT and is actively promoting consideration and ratification of the Treaty by the National People's Congress in accordance with due legal procedures. The seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will be convened next year. Reviewing all aspects of the Treaty and making the appropriate recommendations will promote the three main objectives of the Treaty, ensure its vitality and enhance its effectiveness and universality. We hope that all countries will show good faith and political will and will work together to make the Conference a success.

Beginning the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament at an early date is of crucial importance for promoting the multilateral arms control and non-proliferation process. At present, differences over the agenda reflect divergent views on international disarmament priorities. In order to break the current stalemate, the Conference's programme of work should address the concerns of all parties in a comprehensive and balanced manner. Here, China has made tireless efforts. We have announced our readiness to accept the proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors' proposal — and have an open mind with respect to addressing new issues in the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that the parties will be able to reach consensus on a programme of work at an early date on the basis of the five ambassadors' proposal.

With respect to ensuring the peaceful use of outer space in the common interest of mankind, the current situation highlights the necessity and urgency of preventing the weaponization of, and an arms race in, outer space. Here, China and Russia have jointly submitted several working papers with a view to clarifying our positions and promoting common understanding. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament can begin substantive work on this subject as soon as possible with a view to negotiating international legal instruments in this area.

A fissile material cut-off treaty would contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. China supports the early negotiation of a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. China is now seriously studying the proposal to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty without verification.

China has always devoted itself to the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). Last month the Second Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Asia, jointly sponsored by China and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), was held in Beijing and achieved positive results. For years, chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China have consistently caused human casualties. Such tragic events again underscore the importance and urgency of the early and complete elimination of abandoned Japanese chemical weapons on Chinese territory. China urges Japan to make every effort to start the destruction process at an early date.

The threat of bioterrorism is on the rise, and the issue of biosecurity is increasingly prominent. It is thus necessary to continue multilateral talks on measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). China will continue its active participation in that process and will make every effort to promote the comprehensive and effective implementation of the BWC.

China highly values the role of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or [illegible] Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) in addressing humanitarian concerns. We have already initiated preparations for ratifying the Protocol on explosive remnants of war and will continue to participate actively in the work of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts.

With regard to the issue of mines, other than anti-personnel landmines, China is in favour of seeking an appropriate solution that would strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and security needs and that would take account of countries' differing economic and technical capabilities. In recent years, China has been an active participant in international demining cooperation. We have provided mine-affected countries with demining assistance, including funding, equipment and training. Last April in Kunming, China and the Australian network of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines co-sponsored a workshop on humanitarian landmine and unexploded ordnance clearance technology and cooperation. The workshop promoted exchanges and cooperation between donor countries and mine-affected countries. We will continue to give as much support as we can to international mine-clearance operations. We are also ready to intensify exchanges and cooperation with all interested countries and international organizations in this regard.

China supports and has participated constructively in the negotiation of an international instrument on marking and tracing illicit small arms and light weapons. We hope that the parties will continue to work on the basis of the report adopted by the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons (A/58/138), with a view to achieving positive results. China also attaches importance to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We are making intensive preparations for ratifying the Protocol and wish to see its early entry into force.

In view of the mounting threat of terrorism, it is necessary to strengthen the management of man-portable air-defence systems. China is ready to work with other parties to further explore rational and effective measures to prevent the use of such weaponry by terrorists.

Information security affects not only national economies and people's livelihoods, but also international security and stability. China supports the further consideration of that issue by the group of governmental experts on information security with a view to making concrete proposals.

For years the First Committee of the General Assembly, as the international forum most responsible for security and disarmament, has played a role of historic significance in promoting international disarmament and enhancing international security. In today's changing international situation there is room to improve the efficiency and working methods of the First Committee. Members have submitted various proposals in that regard. China is ready for open-minded discussions with all parties. Reform of the First Committee is a complicated issue with many elements. It is thus unrealistic to expect to reach the goal in one move. We need patience. Based on our principles, we would like to make a number of suggestions. First, the nature of the First Committee as the most representative international forum on security and disarmament should be maintained. Reform efforts should focus on tapping the Committee's potential, enhancing its role and improving its efficiency. Secondly, democratic and universal participation in the work of the Committee should not be jeopardized. We must ensure that every party has the opportunity to express its views on issues of concern. Thirdly, reform of the Committee should proceed in parallel with reform of the United Nations as a whole and of other disarmament mechanisms. And finally, reform measures should be feasible and should reflect the concerns of all parties.

In the new century the developing international situation has not only posed serious challenges but has also opened up bright prospects. Together with other countries, we are ready to advance the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process, thus making our proper contribution to creating a peaceful and safer world.

Mr. D'Alotto (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Brazil spoke on behalf of the Rio Group yesterday and will also do so on behalf of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and associated countries in the thematic debate. The delegation of Argentina fully associates itself with those statements. For that reason, and for the sake of brevity, my delegation will limit itself to making the following comments.

We continue to be concerned at the continuing risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which threatens the internal security of States and global stability. In the new millennium, the highest priority must be given to renouncing weapons of mass destruction. We reiterate once again that the challenge posed by terrorism as a new and genuine international threat adds a new dimension to the issue of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. That new dimension requires concrete and innovative action by the international community that embraces all situations of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We need to work towards full implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and to ensure their strengthening and universalization.

We await with interest the deliberations on increasing the effectiveness of the working methods of the First Committee. We have made known our position on this important issue and have read with great interest the opinions expressed by other delegations. We have also identified major points of agreement on which we expect to continue working. We highlight in particular the need to follow up the implementation of the resolutions we adopt.

We have decided to submit a draft resolution entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". We do so convinced that dialogue and mutual understanding are the basis on which to generate the political will we require. We thank in advance all delegations that have expressed their desire to join in sponsoring the draft resolution, and we invite all delegations to join this initiative.

Mr. Chairman, you can count on the full cooperation of our delegation during the Committee's session so that we may attain the expected results.

Mr. Skotnikov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In today's rapidly evolving world, which is facing new challenges and threats, it is all the more important that the international community take concerted action in maintaining security and stability. The Russian Federation consistently advocates that the United Nations play the central role in carrying out this task, one which is vital for humanity. The United Nations has the capacity to do it; as President Putin of the Russian Federation has said,

> "an adequate response to the most serious threats of the twenty-first century — international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and regional conflicts — can only be provided by the united efforts of the world community relying on the tools of the United Nations and international law".

One of the most important areas for a joint effort by the international community is that of non-proliferation, arms reduction and disarmament. The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), their means of delivery and related materials and technologies is particularly urgent in the current environment. Negative trends in this area are on the increase, and joint efforts by all nations are needed to reverse them. The endeavour should be aimed at both strengthening the relevant multilateral instruments and mechanisms and at taking effective national measures. The Group of Eight set out its ideas in that regard in Action Plan on Non-Proliferation, adopted in June at the Sea Island summit.

The timeliness of taking effective non-proliferation measures today is dictated also by the threat of WMDs falling into the hands of terrorists. With a view to removing that threat, the Security Council, with Russia's extremely active participation, formulated and adopted its resolution 1540 (2004). The resolution lays a solid foundation for action against WMD black markets, which are the most likely channels through which terrorists could obtain such weapons and related materials. It is necessary now to ensure the resolution's complete implementation by all States. We also stress that the tasks of countering WMD proliferation and combating terrorism should be carried out in strict conformity with the norms of international law and taking into account the legitimate security and development interests of all States.

The central role in strengthening the regime of nuclear non-proliferation lies with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Russia strictly and consistently implements its obligations and initiatives in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, particularly within the framework of article VI of the Treaty. Our practical deeds are there to prove it. Russia submitted detailed information in that respect to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We believe that a step-by-step advance towards comprehensive and total nuclear disarmament, based on a comprehensive approach, is needed, and that no unrealistic benchmarks or objectives should be proposed. Nuclear disarmament cannot be conducted in isolation from the situation with respect to other kinds of weapons and without taking into account political developments in the world, particularly in Europe, including the evolution and enlargement of military-political alliances.

We attach great importance to the success of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. Regrettably, the results of the most recent session of the Preparatory Committee inspire no optimism. It is important that by the 2005 Conference all Treaty members understand that the main thing that unites them is the need to preserve the NPT and to enhance, on the basis of the Treaty, the effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Russia views the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a key instrument for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Its significance is evidenced by the second Joint Ministerial Statement of support for the CTBT launched during this session, on 23 September 2004. We call on all countries that have not yet signed and ratified the CTBT to do so as soon as possible, first and foremost those States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to enter into force. It is also important that until that time the moratorium on nuclear-weapons-test explosions and all other nuclear explosions continue.

In his address to the present session of the General Assembly (see A/59/PV.8), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia once again drew attention to the need to keep outer space free of weapons. As members know, in the interests of achieving that aim, Russia and China, with a number of other States as co-authors, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament a draft text on basic elements of a comprehensive agreement on preventing the weaponization of outer space. The draft sets out the following fundamental obligations: not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying weapons of any kind; not to emplace such weapons on celestial bodies; not to station such weapons in outer space in any other manner; and not to have recourse to the threat or use of force against outer-space objects. The conceptual discussion of this issue has advanced over the past year. We hope that the work of the Conference on Disarmament will be unblocked and its ad hoc committee on outer space will be re-established to begin substantive multilateral discussion of a draft agreement on the matter.

Russia is pursuing a steady course of preventing an arms race in outer space. Let us recall that as far back as 1983 the Soviet Union assumed an obligation not to be the first to station any kind of anti-satellite weapons in outer space. We remain committed to that obligation. Moreover, we will not be the first to place any weapons in outer space. We call on all nations with an outer-space potential to follow suit, which will make it possible to maintain a peaceful outer space. We are confident that this would benefit all nations, without exception.

We believe that missile non-proliferation is another priority. Regrettably, the Group of Governmental Experts on the issue of missiles in all its aspects, which had been working this year on a draft report of the Secretary-General on missiles, failed to make progress because of serious differences in the positions of a number of States. Nevertheless, the United Nations should continue a substantive discussion of missile issues.

It is very important that all countries meet their commitments under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), primarily those related to the destruction of such weapons. Russia supports efforts aimed at making the CWC universal and at establishing national mechanisms for its implementation.

We continue to advocate the strengthening of the regime of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction by creating a verification mechanism for the Treaty. Such a mechanism could help prevent hazardous biological materials and technologies from spreading and from falling into the hands of terrorists. We must work to make the Convention universal. From our perspective, the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/32, submitted by Russia, has made a good start. This is the first experience of a joint analysis with a view to working out an agreed approach in this area. It is important that the General Assembly at this session adopt another resolution on agenda item 60, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security", so to reaffirm the general framework and direction of the Group's activities. It is hoped that, drawing on previous experience, such a draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

We have a positive assessment of the work of the Geneva-based Group of Governmental Experts within the framework of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). The adoption of the new Protocol V to the CCW, aimed at reducing the humanitarian aftermath of the explosive remnants of war, has proved to be a significant event. It is now important for all States to complete all national ratification procedures with respect to the new Protocol so as to ensure its prompt entry into force.

We underscore once again the leading role of the United Nations in shaping a holistic approach to problems regarding small arms and light weapons. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 58/241, the first session of the Open-Ended Working Group to

Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, held last June, proceeded to elaborate a draft international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. Russia will continue its constructive participation in the activities of the Group; the Group could be in a position to put forward specific proposals for the 2006 review conference on small arms and light weapons.

Progress in promoting security and disarmament at the regional level can undoubtedly have a positive impact on global efforts in that sphere. In July 2004, Russia joined three other States — Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine — in ratifying the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). It envisages a considerable adjustment in the limitations system and other CFE provisions taking into account changes in the political and military situation on the continent. It also opens up the possibility for wider membership of the Treaty. The Agreement should make a considerable contribution to European security. The prompt entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty would be in the interests of all parties. It would fulfil the commitment "to move forward expeditiously to facilitate completion of national ratification procedures" set out in the Final Act of the 1999 Conference of the States Parties to the CFE Treaty. Russia sees no constructive alternative to the expeditious entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty.

Regrettably, we have not succeeded in launching the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament, and the Disarmament Commission has been stalled as well. The main reason, again, is a lack of political will to seek compromise. Nevertheless, a number of important substantive discussions of agenda items have been held this year, albeit in an informal format. Those discussions showed that the Conference has a great deal of work before it and revealed the willingness of most participants to see the Conference get down to business at last. We hope that efforts aimed at bringing positions closer with a view to agreeing on the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, will be stepped up and will lead to the long-awaited breakthrough.

Russia remains open to further discussions of ways to improve the efficiency of the First Committee's work. With that in mind, it is especially important to take into account the specific nature of its tasks and purview, to have respect for the rights of member States and to ensure that our approach is linked with the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly as a whole.

Mr. Ilicak (Turkey): I should like first to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to extend our best wishes for the successful completion of our work under your able guidance.

A new security environment has come about in the post-cold-war period. In this new environment, the single threat emanating from one bloc and directed at the other has been replaced by multifarious, uncountable, non-conventional, asymmetric risks and threats. Ethnic and religious fundamentalism, organized crime, trafficking in human beings, drugs and weapons, environmental disasters, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) have become daily security issues.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 demonstrated the tenuousness of the new strategic environment. Governments and world public opinion have realized that terrorism could be devastating to our societies if it were equipped with weapons of mass destruction. The horror of dirty bombs has started to haunt our Governments. That, in turn, increased our vigilance on the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery.

In principle, Turkey favours global, overall disarmament. In the light of that ideal, it supports all efforts to maintain international security through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. My country, which is situated close to regions posing high risks of proliferation, takes a firm stand against the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery. It is important to maintain and, if need be, strengthen the legal framework and redefine and expand the basic parameters of international instruments and export control regimes. Turkey is a party to all instruments and regimes in the field of WMDs and gives its full support to the Proliferation Security Initiative.

We consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Therefore, Turkey calls on those countries that remain outside the Treaty to accede to it and on those that have lapsed in their implementation fully to comply with their Treaty obligations.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) international safeguards system is an essential part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to conclude additional protocols with the IAEA, and we support all initiatives to strengthen conditions for the supply of highly sensitive nuclear equipment and technology. In that vein, Turkey supports the proposal to make signing an additional protocol a condition of supply.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a measure against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as envisaged in article VII of the NPT. Turkey supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones wherever feasible. Assurance of the total absence of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in a particular geographical area would have direct, positive implications for the security concerns of States in that region. In this context, Turkey supports the idea of creating a WMD-free zone in the Middle East and encourages all efforts towards a common regional understanding on this project, with the participation of all parties concerned.

We view the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an important element of the international nuclear safeguards regime. Therefore, we call upon the remaining 11 States to become parties to the Treaty without delay in order to make way for the entry into force of the CTBT sooner rather than later.

Turkey attaches special importance to the negotiation of a non-discriminatory and universal treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The banning of the production of such material would strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and thus international security. In the Conference on Disarmament it is essential to start negotiations on the basis of the report of the special coordinator on this item (CD/1299) and the mandate outlined therein, of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons also pose a significant threat to peace and security as well as to the social and economic development of many communities and countries. It is generally believed that, on average, 500,000 people are killed each year with small arms. According to the *Small Arms Survey 2004*, among these, 300,000 people are said to die in armed conflicts and 200,000 in events not attributed to conflict situations. We will continue actively to contribute to all efforts within the United Nations and other forums to foster international cooperation and the evolution of effective norms and rules to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Turkey, cognizant of the dangers posed by small arms and light weapons, together with Australia and Argentina, is submitting a draft resolution on man-portable air-defence systems. Turkey holds the view that the international community must work together to avoid such technologically advanced small arms and light weapons from falling into the wrong hands. I am confident that the draft resolution will have the benefit of the full support of the Committee.

In addition to the threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we are fully conscious of the human suffering and the casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Turkey, in a joint action with Greece, became a party to the Ottawa Convention on 1 March 2004. But mine clearance activities have been implemented in Turkey since 1998, and it is planned that the work to clear all deployed mines will be completed by 2014, in line with our commitments arising from the Convention. Furthermore, we have initiated consultations with our neighbours in order to start a demining process on our borders.

Mr. Bar (Israel), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

As a sponsor of General Assembly resolution 58/41, Turkey fully shares the objective of improving the effectiveness of the working methods of the First Committee in line with the threats that have become more apparent for the international community. The current international security environment is increasingly defined by risks and threats of international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, regional instability and conflict, organized crime, and extremism of all kinds. Streamlining the work of the Main Committees is an important dimension of United Nations reform, which we support. All member States have a stake in this process. It would be useful to put behind us the disagreements on the modalities and to begin focusing on structural and administrative matters aimed at pragmatic results. Establishing trust, enhancing our common understanding and taking stock of the experience gained from this restructuring exercise should be the guiding elements at this stage.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus congratulates Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. He can count on our support and cooperation in his activities.

The world has not become more secure or calmer in the past year. The threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and of their falling into the hands of terrorists and terrorist organizations capable of using them against civilians is still a sword of Damocles for society. Every day, scores of people are the victims of anti-personnel landmines and of small arms and light weapons. We are confident that the only way to solve the problems lies in the multilateral approach and depends upon the efforts of the entire international community. Today's problems also require that the central role of the United Nations and the coordination of its actions with regional organizations be strengthened. Unfortunately, the First Committee remains the only United Nations forum in the area of international security, disarmament and non-proliferation with a complete agenda and with the capacity for taking decisions of principle. Neither the Disarmament Commission nor the Conference on Disarmament has been able to reach consensus on its agenda.

As a State that lays stress on the role of those bodies in strengthening international security, Belarus cannot fail to be concerned by that situation. We are convinced that their potential has not been exhausted and that all we need is the political will of all countries interested in the true consolidation of the central role of the United Nations in ensuring peace and security.

Belarus welcomes the active role of the Security Council in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We are ready to cooperate fully with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004). In view of today's international security situation and of the real threat that terrorists will build and use so-called dirty bombs, the Republic of Belarus intends to make its contribution to the international community's efforts. We are convinced that General Assembly resolution 57/50, entitled "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons" and initiated by Belarus, is a complement to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and is aimed at reducing the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Belarus also welcomes the Proliferation Security Initiative and shares its objectives. In conformity with our national legislation, we are ready to cooperate with the States participating in the Proliferation Security Initiative in taking active measures to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. At the same time, we emphasize that all activities aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems should be based on the multilateral approach and must not undermine the international community's confidence in the methods and mechanisms developed within the framework of the current non-proliferation regimes and the relevant international structures.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the most important instrument in this sphere, providing the international community with a consistent programme of action in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite the absence of coordinated substantive recommendations by the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, we consider the Conference to be a real opportunity for the international community to overcome inertia and take a step forward towards reach the goals identified in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference.

Belarus stands for the earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We call upon all States that are not parties to the CTBT to accede to it without delay.

One of the most important issues is the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The Conference on Disarmament must proceed with consultations on this problem. The issue of the military use of outer space must also be the subject of an international legal regime, particularly with respect to banning the deployment of offensive weapons in space.

The Republic of Belarus pursues a responsible and consistent foreign policy aimed at fulfilling its commitments in the sphere of international security, disarmament and non-proliferation. As one of the

States that has adopted the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation — the Hague Code of Conduct — Belarus stands for the establishment of comprehensive cooperation between the Code and the United Nations.

We attach primary importance to the fulfilment of national obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In compliance with the Convention, our country must destroy its landmine stockpiles within four years. Belarus requires considerable financial and technological resources to ensure the elimination of more than 4 million anti-personnel mines inherited after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In this connection we appeal to Governments and international governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide technical, technological and financial assistance to Belarus in its efforts to eliminate its landmine stockpiles.

Belarus advocates the expansion of transparency measures in armaments and regularly submits data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We also submit information about the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/24 V, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Our delegation supports the activity of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Belarus attaches special importance to developing confidence-building measures at regional and bilateral levels; this issue is one of the priorities of our foreign policy. As a result of active cooperation with neighbouring countries, Belarus has set up what it calls a belt of good-neighbourliness along its borders. Agreements on complementary confidence- and security-building measures were concluded in 2004 with Latvia and Poland. We view those agreements as a real contribution to consolidating regional and European security systems.

We are carefully considering proposals made by a number of States with respect to reform of the First Committee. We must decide on a multilateral basis on measures to improve the work of the Committee and to make it more effective, a goal which we support. Like other delegations, we express the hope that this process can be synchronized with overall reform of the United Nations.

In conclusion, our delegation would like to xpress the hope that the international community will develop reliable mechanisms for countering new risks and threats. For its part, the Republic of Belarus will continue to be an active participant in the process.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation wishes to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. Allow me also to express appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for his introductory statement.

It was believed that the end of the cold war and its replacement by an evolving new international order would create a new security environment propitious for cooperation between erstwhile adversaries to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of that new order. Indeed, some progress was made in the right direction. It is disappointing, however, that the threat to peace and security has increased rather than decreased. Traditional threats to peace are being overwhelmed by new forms of threat, such as terrorism. The traditional actors — States — are being overshadowed by non-territorial and faceless non-State actors, including terrorists, warlords, drug-lords and other lawless transnational operators. Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have not been eliminated or even meaningfully reduced, and the destruction caused by small arms and other conventional weapons and by landmines has also been horrendously disastrous in its destabilizing effects on States — politically, economically and socially.

Peace and security are threatened not only by nuclear weapons. Other weapons of mass destruction, including in particular chemical and biological weapons, also pose a great threat to the international security environment, especially with the emergence of new advanced technologies that are increasingly available and that readily facilitate the transport and proliferation of such weapons. This is particularly worrisome in the age of rampant terrorism. Terrorism is the scourge of our times. In the little more than a decade of its independent existence, Eritrea has been attacked several times by terrorist groups whose mindless acts have killed citizens and foreign visitors alike. The most recent attack took place during the celebration of the eleventh anniversary of our independence in the provincial capital of Barentu and another town, Tesseney. The villains were from a neighbouring country. Other similar attacks in other towns were foiled in time. The internationalization of terror coupled, along with the easy availability of weapons — all kinds of weapons — and advances in the methods of transport and proliferation, has made the elimination of terrorism and of the weapons it can access a matter of urgent priority.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in many regions of the developing world, particularly Africa, has made those weapons a real threat to peace, security and stability. Their immensely destructive effects are made evident by the scars of war and conflict left in many regions of Africa, particularly the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, as well as in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Eritrean Government is fully cognizant of the need for regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation to terminate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. To that end it has consistently supported all Intergovernmental Authority on Development initiatives and programmes in the Horn of Africa. It has also continued to hold consultations with like-minded States in the region.

The Horn of Africa is one region that has been greatly infested by landmines and unexploded ordnance, which continue to wreak havoc on the livelihood of our people long after the end of conflict. Those nefarious weapons have claimed, and continue to claim, numerous victims every year in spite of the great effort made to clear them. They have had a baneful effect on reconstruction efforts and development programmes. The Government of Eritrea is creating safety nets to protect the vulnerable members of society, including children and the elderly, from the adverse consequences of landmines and unexploded ordnance in a long-term strategy to undertake a comprehensive programme to address the humanitarian consequences of Ethiopian aggression.

There is now near-universal agreement that the international community can meet the challenges of the times, including traditional and new threats to peace, security and stability, only through multilateralism. It is also readily accepted that the United Nations — a strengthened, revitalized and reformed United Nations — remains an indispensable instrument in humanity's quest for disarmament, the destruction of weapons of mass destruction, the termination of the threat posed to developing countries by small arms and light weapons and an end the scourge of terrorism and similar phenomena.

The Eritrean delegation shares the concern expressed by previous speakers that the role of multilateralism in disarmament and peace and security matters is decreasing and the view that only multilateralism — especially when under the auspices of the United Nations — can provide credibility and legitimacy. It is therefore imperative to promote multilateralism and to ensure the primacy of the role of the United Nations. Multilateralism must be bolstered by the democratization of international relations, the promotion of the rule of law, the rejection of the logic of force and respect for the Charter and the sanctity of treaty agreements.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, to congratulate Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We are confident that his vast diplomatic experience and skills will enhance our deliberations on disarmament and international security. We wish him and the other members of the Bureau every success. I wish also to thank the Chairman of the Committee at the fifty-eighth session and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and his Office for their commendable efforts to develop new mechanisms to foster international cooperation in the fields of disarmament and international peace and security.

In view of their nature, their significance and their direct relationship to the question of the maintenance of regional and international peace and security, items under consideration in this important Committee reflect some of the most vital issues on the General Assembly's agenda at the fifty-ninth session. Without addressing them, we will be unable to reap the desired benefits of stability, security, globalization and sustainable development. The rapid international changes of the past decade were accompanied by dangerous security threats which have led in one way or another to insecurity and instability, to an increase in violence and terrorism and to the spread of conflicts regionally and within nations, afflicting millions of people.

Neighbouring countries and other States are also drawn in to such conflicts. We must understand the significant human, financial and environmental losses caused by the threats to security and the huge quantities and varied types of weapons used in these conflicts and the consequent difficulties that post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction entail. Such resources could have been used to promote the goals and programmes of development and the welfare of the people. We must improve our common understanding of the underlying causes of armed conflict and existing threats. We should strengthen the role of disarmament in stopping and preventing conflicts in order to create a world free from violence and fear, based on the principles of confidence, tolerance and solidarity among countries and peoples. We are of the firm view that stability and just peace in areas of tension and conflict, especially in the Arab Gulf region and in neighbouring countries, will not be attained while some countries carry out nuclear tests and hasten to acquire, transfer, produce and stockpile nuclear and fissile materials on the pretext of preventive security. That has led to a clear strategic and military imbalance in those regions.

We should adopt a common approach to settle conflicts and disputes by peaceful and legal means. States should abide by their obligations and responsibilities enshrined in the Charter, international law and the international conventions and legal arrangements regulating international relations, particularly those calling for mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in their internal affairs, rejection of the use of force and the settlement of their disputes through peaceful negotiations.

Despite the fact that the cold war has come to an end, there has been regression in the process of putting an end to international confrontations, which in most cases involve a wide-ranging strategic arms race and a nuclear threat. This is reflected in the latest statistics, which show that global military expenditure on the production and stockpiling of such weapons has increased by 5 per cent in the past year. That runs counter to the Millennium Development Goals and to the commitments undertaken by States at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It also runs counter to the practical steps taken by the Conference to enhance and strengthen the role of the Disarmament Commission and to oblige nuclear-weapon States to comply with their obligations as provided in the treaties and protocols on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Those States should reduce military expenditure and reallocate the resources to development. Similarly, non-nuclear States pursuing the acquisition of these weapons are urged to reconsider their positions and to exercise self-control. In that connection, we call for a serious and binding international instrument providing safeguards to States that possess neither nuclear weapons nor other weapons of mass destruction. We also call for the development of specialized mechanisms to follow up and monitor the gradual elimination of those weapons, including the establishment of an international agency authorized to negotiate a multilateral treaty prohibiting the production of fissile materials for the purposes of manufacturing nuclear weapons.

The United Arab Emirates, which has acceded to a number of treaties promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons with the aim of enhancing their universality, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention, believes that the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a critical factor in easing tension and disputes and reducing regional armaments. We therefore reiterate our call for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf. We urge Israel, the only state in the region that has not acceded to the NPT, to do so and to dismantle all its dangerous nuclear facilities after subjecting them to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and with the decisions taken at the second NPT Review Conference, held in 2000. We appeal to all States to suspend scientific and financial assistance to Israel that is used in developing its nuclear facilities, which threaten efforts to achieve peace and security in the Middle East.

In conclusion, we are of the view that worldwide comprehensive disarmament requires the rationalization and reform of the working methods of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission and the development of effective international mechanisms to regulate States' acquisition, production and stockpiling of advanced weapons, with a view to creating a stable regional and international environment free from all threats and where peaceful coexistence, security, welfare and prosperity prevail.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of the Committee and by assuring him of my delegation's full support. Mexico's commitment in the area of arms control and disarmament, as well as his personal experience in multilateral diplomacy, will undoubtedly prove to be significant assets in ensuring the success of our work.

The objective of our work in the First Committee is to meet the major challenges in the field of arms control and disarmament. Besides nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation we should mention the problem of terrorist groups acquiring weapons of mass destruction and the challenges posed by certain conventional weapons which kill thousands every year.

As a number of delegations observed yesterday, the First Committee is the ideal mechanism for international cooperation in the field of arms control and disarmament. We should not underestimate the importance of continuing our activity in the framework of multilateral security based on international law and providing for effective verification measures.

Our first task is to improve the First Committee's working methods. Here, my delegation supports the Chairman's proposal to implement without delay certain measures to bring about practical improvements in our work, taking into account the proposals contained in General Assembly resolution 58/136. In particular, we welcome the Chairman's proposal to conduct an interactive exchange of views on the work ahead and on the priorities to be set.

We are concerned at the meagre progress in the sphere of weapons of mass destruction. We must recognize that the total elimination of those weapons remains a distant goal. But there are some measures which can be implemented without delay and which should allow us to approach that objective.

The first, and the most urgent, measure is to respect existing commitments. In this vein we note with satisfaction that Libya has halted in toto its weapons of mass destruction programme. Inter alia, my delegation calls on Iran to respect all the resolutions adopted on 18 September by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Furthermore, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all military nuclear programmes; here, we support all efforts to find a diplomatic solution to nuclear questions on the Korean peninsula.

The second important measure is to increase our efforts to achieve the universalization of all agreements in the field of weapons of mass destruction. We call on those countries that have not yet done so to ratify without delay the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

The third measure is, without delay, to start negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a ban of the production of fissile materials for military purposes. My country would like all members of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on the programme of work at the beginning of next year, which would finally allow substantive work to start on this issue.

The Chairman returned to the Chair.

The picture is less disheartening with respect to conventional weapons. In the field of small arms and light weapons, there has been substantial progress with respect to the implementation of the Programme of Action, and negotiations started this year in New York on an international instrument on marking and tracing. My colleague Ambassador Anton Thalmann, who is chairing the negotiations, is planning informal consultations on 20 October, at the margins of the First Committee's session. Last November, the States parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) succeeded in adopting the fifth Protocol, on explosive remnants of war. Those efforts must continue; my country is committed to actively chairing the group of military experts formed to minimize the impact of those arms.

Finally, the first Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which will take place in Nairobi in November, will be an opportunity both to welcome the important progress achieved since the entry into force of the Convention and to renew our commitment to a world free of anti-personnel mines. An important goal for my country will be the universalization of the Convention and the respect of its provisions, including by non-State actors.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Sir, I should like to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the current session of the General Assembly. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

We also wish to thank the delegation of Brazil for the detailed statement it made on behalf of the Rio Group. While we fully support that statement, my delegation believes it would be timely to make additional observations on some of the items that we consider to be pertinent, as well as on the overall panorama in the sphere of disarmament and international security. We will, however, refrain from addressing priority agenda issues, even though much remains to be done on them.

Once again, the First Committee is meeting in an atmosphere of uncertainty in the sphere of international security. We have witnessed a series of acts of terrorism that, while directly affecting a number of countries, have shaken us all equally. They not only mark a new era in international security, introducing a new dimension with regard to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, but they also pose new challenges for the work of the First Committee and for the entire disarmament machinery. Now more than ever, we are convinced that fighting terrorism requires activity by each of our countries, complemented by multilateral action, in which both regional and global bodies have a fundamental role to play.

Thus, the resolutions that have been adopted on the recommendation of the First Committee and the legal instruments that have been adopted within the United Nations represent now, more than ever, a means by which States may collectively address this new international reality in an effective way. Not only must we preserve our achievements in the area of disarmament, but we must also enhance and strengthen them by means of universal membership and implementation.

We are aware of the momentum gained by the efforts towards revitalization made at the last session of the General Assembly as well as the new practical measures that those efforts have begun to generate. We have thus been studying various proposals to improve the functioning of the First Committee, and we welcome the gradual implementation of changes on which consensus exists. Nevertheless, we believe that the nature of the First Committee should not change, since this is the most appropriate and most representative international forum on disarmament and security issues. What we can and must do is strengthen the Committee.

In this respect, bearing in mind the benefits that accrue from collective action, we should concentrate our efforts on the implementation of our resolutions and on ensuring that they are fulfilled. This could be the result of supplementing follow-up mechanisms with the political will necessary to fulfil them. Any change we are willing to make in the Committee will have repercussions for the two other essential components of multilateral disarmament: the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. Hence, the interrelationship among disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation requires that the sphere of our activities be centred on a preponderant role for United Nations.

Before concluding I should like to refer briefly to two specific issues that are of particular importance to our delegation. First, we reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and of the provisions of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We shall thus continue to move ahead in the implementation of their programmes at the national level. We welcome the holding of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention to be held next week in Nairobi, Kenya, and of the second biennial meeting for the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms, to be held in July 2005 in New York.

Secondly, we wish to emphasize the importance of our recently created National Disarmament

Commission, whose main objective is to implement a national disarmament programme, coordinating the activities of a variety of actors in order to lower the incidence of armed violence, make weapons and ammunition less available and make people aware of the evil effects of weapons. Another fundamental function of the commission is to serve as the national organ responsible for ensuring regulatory compliance, carrying out investigations and supervising initiatives for combating illicit trafficking. It also aims to be the international point of contact for disarmament issues.

This session marks the beginning of a busy year in the area of disarmament. The Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms will provide an opportunity to find new ways of countering the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Furthermore the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will give us an opportunity to reaffirm our determination to prevent the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons, with an unequivocal commitment to eliminate them. This is becoming ever more important now that the issue of terrorism is at the top of the global security agenda and that there is an unprecedented possibility of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. Let us use this opportunity to send a clear, principled message affirming our commitment to make progress in the areas of disarmament and international security.

Agenda item 109

Programme planning

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite the Secretary of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Movses Abelian, to brief us on agenda item 109 with respect to the proposed strategic framework and, specifically, on its consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Mr. Abelian (Secretary of the Fifth Committee): Upon your request, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the First Committee I should like to provide some clarification on agenda item 109, "Programme Planning". At the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly this agenda item has been allocated to the First Committee based on the mandates of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. In its resolution 54/236 of 1999 the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which recommended that the specialized agencies, the Economic and Social Council and the Main Committees of the General Assembly should include in their programme of work an item on programme planning for the review of the proposed medium-term plan and its revisions. Subsequently, at the fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly in its resolution 57/282 reiterated its view that the relevant intergovernmental bodies, as well as the Economic and Social Council and the Main Committees, should include in their programmes of work a review of recommendations of the Committee on Programme and Coordination relevant to their work and take appropriate action.

As members know, last year, at the fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly, acting on the proposal of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the United Nations agenda for change, decided to request the Secretary-General to prepare, on a trial basis, for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, a strategic framework to replace the current four-year medium-term plan, which would comprise two parts: part A, a plan outline reflecting the longer term objectives of the Organization, and part B, a biennial programme plan which covers only two years.

At its forty-fourth session the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which works on the basis of consensus, was not able to reach a consensus on the programme of disarmament. The General Assembly, based on the recommendation of the Committee on Programme and Coordination, upon the decision of the General Committee, allocated the programme on disarmament of the strategic framework to the First Committee for its review and action and subsequent submission to the Fifth Committee for its consideration of the strategic framework for the period 2006-2007. The General Assembly allocated relevant programmes not only to the First Committee. It allocated programmes to other Main Committees as well. For example, the programme on trade and development has been allocated to the Second Committee; the programme on human rights allocated to the Third Committee; and the programme on public information has been allocated to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

In accordance with the rules of programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation it is up to the General Assembly — in this case, up to the First Committee — to accept, to curtail, to reformulate or to reject the strategic framework proposed by the Secretary-General. The medium-term plan — or, as we call it now, the strategic framework — is the translation of legislative mandates into programmes and subprogrammes. Its objectives and strategies are derived from policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental bodies and reflect the priorities of Member States set out in the legislation — in this case First Committee resolutions. Priorities established in the medium-term plan or strategic framework shall guide the allocation of budgetary and extrabudgetary resources in the subsequent programme budgets.

Consideration of the medium-term plan by the First Committee is not new. The last time the First Committee had the issue before it was at the fifty-fifth session, when the General Assembly was considering the current medium-term plan for 2002-2005. At the fifty-fifth session, the First Committee took note of the medium-term plan on the programme of disarmament and endorsed the recommendation of the Committee on Programme and Coordination subsequently transmitted to the Fifth Committee. This time, the difference is that, as I said, the Committee on Programme and Coordination was not able to reach a consensus. So there is a proposal by the Secretary-General, contained in document A/59/6 (Programme 3), and there is a chapter of the report of the Committee on Programme and Coordination (A/59/16) relevant to the programme on disarmament, which includes a section on the Committee's discussion and also relevant proposals that were prepared by member States during the Committee's deliberations. But none of those proposals were endorsed by the Committee.

Because the Committee on Programme and Coordination is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, it is now up to the First Committee to consider the Secretary-General's proposed strategic framework on disarmament, look at the proposals, accept, reject or modify them and come up with a final product. The action of the First Committee will be final, because the Fifth Committee is not going to reopen anything once it has been endorsed by the First Committee.

Procedurally, the Committee will have before it the two documents I mentioned: A/59/6 (Programme 3) and A/59/16. There will be an introduction by the programme manager of the disarmament programme. Officials of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and of the Programme Planning and Budget Division will be here to assist the Committee in its deliberations and in achieving a final result.

I am prepared to answer any questions that members may have.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before proceeding, let me note that the Chair intends to take up this matter in due detail at a future meeting.

Now, I would ask all members to look at the documents mentioned by the Secretary of the Fifth Committee: A/59/6 (Programme 3), which contains the Secretary-General's proposed strategic framework; and A/59/16, the report of the Committee on Programme and Coordination, containing recommendations and suggestions made by a number of members of that Committee. When we consider the Secretary-General's proposals and any suggestions about modifying or amending them — bearing in mind that there was no consensus in the Committee on Programme and Coordination — we will be able to engage in a detailed review of each one and approve or reject it. That will ultimately yield a consensus on a proposed strategic framework. I think this will require a special effort and numerous consultations; I shall be involved in some of them, the Vice-Chairmen in others. I just want to stress that this is an important exercise.

We are pleased to have the Secretary of the Fifth Committee with us, and I call on any members who wish to ask him any preliminary or general questions that might help us in addressing this issue.

Mr. Umer (Pakistan): We agree that this is an extremely important matter, particularly in the light of the fact that the Committee for Programme and Coordination — for the first time ever, I believe — was unable to reach agreement on the strategic framework for 2006-2007. The documents now before us were circulated only very recently, so I think it would be appropriate if you, Sir, convened a meeting so that we could have a good and full discussion.

I have one small query for the Secretariat. Paragraph 89 of document A/59/16 tell us that "The following amendments were proposed to programme 3, Disarmament". Who proposed the amendments? Were they proposed by countries, and, if so, which countries? They should be listed so that we know. Who was the author of the amendments? Or were the amendments proposed by the Secretariat in the light of the discussion that took place in the Committee on Programme and Coordination? Could the Secretary of the Fifth Committee, or anyone else, enlighten us on this important matter?

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the Secretary of the Fifth Committee.

Mr. Abellan (Secretary of the Fifth Committee): The amendments set out in paragraph 89 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/59/16) were proposed by Member States. In accordance with the Committee's working methods, its members did not ask for identification of the authors of the amendments when they were having informal consultations. Sometimes, a member State would ask who the author was, when an author country introduced an amendment and negotiations were taking place. Of course, the Secretariat's Programme Planning and Budget Division has the information on who the authors are, but it is up to the First Committee, in conformity with its own working methods, to list the names of those countries when it holds its discussions or to go along with the working methods followed by the Committee on Programme and Coordination.

These are all proposals submitted by Member States. The Secretariat's original proposal is the Secretary-General's proposed strategic framework contained in document A/59/6. All the proposals in paragraph 89 of document A/59/16, I believe, are proposals by Member States.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I do indeed intend to hold a meeting on this matter, as the representative of Pakistan requested, either next week or a little later, once we have made some progress in preliminary consultations. These consultations are important; I think it would be a good idea for delegations to look both at the initial proposal of the Secretary-General and at the amendments — irrespective of their origin. Delegations that made proposals in the Committee on Programme and Coordination could either repeat them or set them aside. We need to begin this exercise from the particular angle of the First Committee without necessarily continuing the discussion that was begun in the Committee on Programme and Coordination. At any rate, all delegations that are members of the Committee on Programme and Coordination — including my own — will be able to review their positions and to repeat them here if the case arises.

In the absence of objection, I shall take it that members consider that to be an appropriate procedure. As soon as we identify the proper time for a meeting on this item, we shall inform members, on the understanding that it will probably be held next week.

I thank the Secretary of the Fifth Committee for his presence and for the information he has given us and I shall take up his offer that both the Department for Disarmament Affairs — whose Under-Secretary-General is here — and the Programme Planning and Budget Division will help representatives once we start our in-depth consideration of proposed amendments.

Administrative matters

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): As we have now gone into administrative matters, I believe that we could also take advantage of the presence of a representative of the United Nations Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts to have a brief presentation on the process of preparing statements of the programme budget implications of draft resolutions. Programme budget implications have frequently been a cause of delay in our work, which is why I believe it is important to have a clear idea of how they are prepared so that they can be prepared in a timely way.

I stress that it is not my intention to open a discussion on administrative and budgetary matters here. Our job is to analyse the substantive aspect of a proposal and the Fifth Committee's to analyse its implications for the United Nations budget. But better knowledge of those implications can influence negotiations; and that is we need the proper information.

I now call on Mr. Dennis Thatchaichawalit of the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Office for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, to make a presentation on this subject.

Mr. Thatchaichawalit: The basis for the statement of programme budget implications (PBIs) is founded in the provisions of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which provides that no draft resolution involving expenditure shall be recommended by a Main Committee for approval by the General Assembly unless it is accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General. Thus, when a Main Committee is taking up a draft resolution involving expenditures or financial implications, the Secretariat submits to the Main Committee a statement of programme budget implications informing the Committee of any financial implications resulting from the action requested in the draft resolution.

The second part of rule 153 provides that no draft resolution in respect of which expenditures are anticipated by the Secretariat shall be voted upon by the General Assembly until the Administrative and Budgetary Committee, which is the Fifth Committee, has had an opportunity of stating the effect of the proposal upon the budget estimates of the United Nations. Accordingly, after the adoption of the draft resolution by the Main Committee, the statement of programme budget implications would be submitted to the Fifth Committee through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). The role of the Fifth Committee there is to review the budgetary implications and then to inform the plenary General Assembly of the effect of the draft resolution on United Nations budget estimates.

With the decision by the Fifth Committee the plenary General Assembly is in a position to take the necessary action on the draft resolution recommended by the Main Committee, taking into account the recommendation of the Fifth Committee. Those are the basic procedures in relation to PBIs. I would be pleased to answer any specific questions that Committee members may have.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on those delegations that have questions on this procedure.

Mr. Umer (Pakistan): I am sorry to speak again, but the information provided by the Secretariat raises an important question. If a draft resolution that has financial implications is adopted in this Committee, by implication it would seem that the programme budget implications (PBIs) are also approved by this Committee. According to the information given by the Secretariat, these PBIs go to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and then to the Fifth Committee. Is the Fifth Committee in a position to override the decision of another Main Committee of the General Assembly? What is the legal authority of the Fifth Committee in terms of a PBI that has been approved by another Main Committee?

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): The rules of procedure regarding programme budget implications (PBIs) are very explicit, and we know that. However, it seems from the experience of last year not only in this Committee, but particularly in another Committee — that the content of the presentation of the PBI prepared by the Secretariat is sometimes problematic. Could we have a brief description of the guidelines and format that the Secretariat maintains in presenting PBIs. If we have this, we can reduce the controversy that exists. Last year it was not as bad in the First Committee as in other Committees, but such a description might help us during our discussions and consultations with respect to PBIs so that we can avoid controversy at the end of our work.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of the Secretariat to reply to the questions that have been raised.

Mr. Thatchaichawalit: On the first question, concerning the programme budget implications (PBI) issued to a Main Committee, indeed the Main Committee adopts its draft resolution. Technically, the PBI is there to inform the Main Committee of the financial implications of its decision. As the rules of procedure make it clear, all administrative and financial matters fall within the purview of the Fifth Committee. That is why the latter part of rule 153 requires that any decision to be adopted by the plenary General Assembly which has financial implications has to be reviewed by the Fifth Committee.

In effect, if the First Committee adopts a draft resolution, the draft resolution will stay as it is as a substantive decision. But at the same time, according to rule 153, the Secretariat will have to submit the statement of programme budget implications through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the Fifth Committee for its review. Of course the Fifth Committee is in a position, as on any other budgetary issue, to take its own decision — let us say, to overrule what is in the original PBI just as it might do with respect to any other budgetary proposal. So it is still in the hands of the Fifth Committee to take a decision on a budgetary matter. Then with the decision of the Fifth Committee, together with the draft resolution initiated by another

Main Committee, the General Assembly would take a decision on the draft resolution itself.

At the same time, in terms of the budgetary requirements of decisions taken by the Fifth Committee, the decision is taken by the Fifth Committee in the context of the programme budget of the relevant biennium. For example, at the current session, which is halfway through the biennium 2004-2005, the Fifth Committee would make a decision at the end of the session on the level of the revised appropriation for the biennium 2004-2005. In that context, it would take into account the first budget performance report of the biennium to be submitted by the Secretariat during the latter part of the session and would also take into account all the PBIs from the various Main Committees and all the relevant revised estimates. An example would be a revised estimate resulting from a decision or resolution by the Economic and Social Council. So the Fifth Committee would take all those elements into account in arriving at the level of the revised appropriation, which is then recommended to the plenary Assembly for adoption.

That is the budgetary side of the process. The process on the substantive side would still proceed, and a draft resolution from a Main Committee would remain intact with the information that the Committee is indeed taking a decision with complete information in terms of financial implications.

The other question related to the contents of the PBI. For PBIs, as for any other budgetary documents, we have a standard format for the relevant paragraph in a draft resolution that involves financial implications. In the PBI we would also list the programme implications in terms of necessary changes resulting from the draft resolution with respect to the programmatic part of the programme budget. We would then show the financial implications, including whether there are requirements for staff resources, for consultants or for travel. There would also be a portion for the possibility of absorption within the current programme budget. The final paragraph would be a recommendation noting that there would be a certain level of financial implications, and indicating whether we would require additional appropriation or not. That basically is the standard format of a PBI statement.

Mr. Umer (Pakistan): I do not want to belabour this point, but the information given by the Secretariat raises a fundamental question. Let us assume that the First Committee adopts a draft resolution which has budgetary implications of, let us say, $50,000. According to the procedures spelled out by the Secretariat, the statement of programme budget implications goes to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and to the Fifth Committee. Let us assume that the Fifth Committee decides that the money is not available. What happens then? Is it possible for a resolution to be prevented from being implemented because of its budgetary implications? Has this ever happened before in the United Nations system?

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to make an observation. First, it is my understanding that the famous statements of programme budget implications (PBIs) that are distributed in the Main Committees, including the First Committee, are merely for information. I should like to confirm this. It is not for the Committee to approve them. I also understand that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions is not the sole body that can review the implications of PBIs; the Fifth Committee, especially, does so as well. I understand that at the end of the exercise, towards the end of the session, the Fifth Committee studies the PBIs of all Main Committees and carries out an exercise involving negotiations, with a view to absorbing as many as possible into the regular budget and, if necessary, to agree on any increases.

I do not think it is necessary to go into further detail, but I should like to ask the representative of the Secretariat to confirm my understanding because, as the representative of Pakistan has pointed out, it is important that we understand that the Committee is empowered to adopt substantive issues and that the Fifth Committee is in charge of identifying resources. If resources do not exist, the Fifth Committee in one way or the other needs to make the situation clear to all Member States so that decisions taken by a principal organ will not fail to be implemented. But we also need to be realistic and to be aware that, to a large extent, this results from a zero-growth budgetary policy and would not arise if the budget could be increased in a significant way.

I call once again on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Thatchaichawalit: You have made my job much easier, Mr. Chairman. I think you addressed all the questions that have been asked. I just want to add that, in arriving at its decision on the level of the budget, the Fifth Committee has the advantage, as you, Sir, mentioned, of looking at all the statements of programme budget implications (PBIs) emanating from the various Main Committees and legislative bodies. Thus, it takes a decision on the level of the budget as a whole and not on any particular draft resolution or decision. It also has an opportunity to see whether, with all the competing requirements, there might be some areas where there could be alternative solutions. Last year, for example, a number of PBIs involved additional requirements for conference services. When the Fifth Committee actually made the decision on those PBIs, both the Secretariat and the Fifth Committee were in a much better position to determine the overall conference-servicing requirements for the year 2004-2005, given that by the end of the session it had all the requirements. Both the Secretariat and the Fifth Committee were then in a better position to see whether there are areas that could be absorbed, or areas that could be met within the existing requirements.

The Committee can also rest assured that the decision of [illegible] Fifth Committee on the level of the budget does not block the implementation of a decision taken by a Main Committee. As I mentioned earlier, the intention of the statement of programme budget implications is to inform the Committees of financial implications, but how a decision is funded is determined by the Fifth Committee. Of course, the Secretariat would have the obligation to implement a decision taken by a Main Committee as ultimately adopted by the plenary Assembly.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I propose that we leave this issue pending for the time being. I assure members that the Chair will continue to make inquiries in order to respond to the concern expressed by the representative of Pakistan and to identify what the situation has been in the past and whether any mandates have not been financed. I believe that this would be important if, for instance, we were going to review the implementation of the Committee's recommendations and decisions. This is an important matter which we need to consider: it is not enough to agree on a course of action; we also need to make sure that adequate financial resources exist.

I should like to repeat my call to all delegations that will be submitting draft resolutions that might have budgetary or financial implications to consult the Secretariat as soon as possible so that when the time comes we will not have delays on the statements of programme budget implications (PBIs). I also wish to ask the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts to work on the PBIs in a more expeditious manner. I know that we have had difficulties with some draft resolutions in the past because the budget Office was overloaded with work or because there was a lack of clarity between the provisions of a draft resolution and the Secretariat's understanding of them.

I invite everybody to have a more open dialogue that will yield a quicker response to a request for a PBI. It is also important that PBIs be explained in greater detail, especially when they are formulated on the basis of total cost and do not take account of possible resources from various existing budget lines or other sources. That is an exercise that I am sure the Secretariat ought to carry out, because if a decision is budgeted in terms of total cost — taking into account such things as power and room costs — we would obviously see inflated figures. Although it is the Secretariat's job to give us all the figures, a balance must be struck between the real costs and the total costs.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Secretary of the Fifth Committee and the representative of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts for the information they have provided us.

I now call on the Secretary of the First Committee.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the First Committee): I should like to give members the name of the budget officer who deals with disarmament. She is Ms. Sheryl Simmons, and her telephone number is (212) 963-8230. She has said that if members have any questions they should please feel free to phone her.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/59/PV.4

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee

4th meeting

Thursday, 7 October 2004, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. De Alba .... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the following 13 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, the Bahamas. CARICOM delegations would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau, on your election to guide the work of this most challenging and important Committee. We are confident that you will guide our work to a successful conclusion. We pledge our full support and cooperation in that regard.

CARICOM delegations would like to thank Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his introductory remarks highlighting some of the more pressing disarmament and international security issues facing the First Committee at this session. CARICOM delegations also wish once again to pay tribute to the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, for their sterling work throughout the year.

It is a source of concern to CARICOM delegations that once again we must acknowledge that the current climate prevailing in the international disarmament and arms control arena does not inspire much confidence that we, as States Members of the United Nations, are living up to our obligation, contained in the Charter, to preserve international peace and security. Little progress has been made in recent times in restoring confidence in critical multilateral treaties; agreement on enhanced verification measures remains elusive; stalemate still prevails in the Conference on Disarmament; and global military expenditures continue to rise.

It is against that backdrop that this Committee, and the General Assembly as a whole, has engaged in an exercise of critical self-examination and reflection in an effort to identify ways and means to make this body more effective. CARICOM delegations pay tribute to the process initiated by your predecessor, and continued by you, Mr. Chairman, to revitalize and rationalize the work of the Committee, in concert with the ongoing process of the revitalization of the General Assembly as a whole. The adoption of resolution 56/316 earlier this year has provided both the impetus and the context for our deliberations on both procedural and substantive means to improve our methods of work.

CARICOM States welcome the transparency and frank dialogue that have characterised our reform discussions thus far and look forward to continuing discussions on practical and realistic ways in which to make the work of the Committee, and thus of the General Assembly as a whole, have a greater impact on

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the global disarmament agenda and the current threats facing the international community. We must ensure, however, that we do not engage in reform as an end in itself, but rather as a means to make real progress on those issues on our agenda that remain unresolved. It is our hope that we can marry the reform impulse with the necessary political will to ensure that we all meet our Charter obligations.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction continues to be at the forefront of our collective concerns. CARICOM States remain concerned that some of the critical legal instruments governing the multilateral disarmament agenda have recently come under threat or have stalled in implementation. In that context, we reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and continue to call for its universality. We also call on all States parties to the NPT to fully implement their obligations under article VI of the Treaty, as well as the commitments made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. CARICOM States look forward to next year's NPT Review Conference as an opportunity to assess the progress made in implementing the commitments undertaken at the 2000 Review Conference and to chart the way forward to further achieve the purposes and goals of the Treaty.

In that context, CARICOM States also call for a renewed commitment to promoting the entry into force and the implementation of both the letter and the spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including through prompt treaty action by those States whose adherence is needed for its entry into force. We applaud the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization in promoting the entry into force of the Treaty.

We are strongly committed to the process of regional cooperation in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is a source of immense satisfaction to CARICOM States that the Treaty of Tlatelolco commands universal adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean, the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region. We encourage other States engaged in discussions to create nuclear-weapon-free zones to continue to move those processes forward in pursuit of the important goal of non-proliferation.

We, as members of the international community, have committed ourselves to the control and elimination of certain types of weapons, having recognized the indiscriminate and devastating effects that those weapons have on military and civilian populations alike. In that context, CARICOM States are committed to the implementation of the conventions governing the development, production and use of chemical and biological weapons. Accordingly, we welcome the initiative of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to organize a regional workshop on the universality and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is to be held in Saint Kitts and Nevis in November of this year. CARICOM States are also committed to a process of developing and enhancing verification arrangements governing the development, production and use of biological weapons, as a means to promote greater levels of confidence among States.

CARICOM member States are fully aware of the devastating effects of landmines, especially on the more vulnerable members of our societies, including women and children. We therefore look forward to the first Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which is to be held in Nairobi in November this year. At the Nairobi summit on a mine-free world, world leaders will assess the progress made in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines since the entry into force of the Convention. We expect that, with the adoption of the Conference's draft declaration and plan of action, States parties will recommit themselves to overcome the remaining challenges. CARICOM remains committed to the universality of the Ottawa Convention, and expresses its appreciation for the support and assistance received from the international community in mine clearance and stockpile destruction in the few areas of some of our territories that are mined.

While the spectre of weapons of mass destruction hangs over us all, the international community has rightly recognized, and has decided to act upon, the growing threat posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. CARICOM States are strongly committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. CARICOM States do not produce small arms or light weapons, nor are we large-scale importers of that category of weapons. Yet, despite our best efforts, we continue to face the uncontrolled spread of illicit weapons throughout our territories, most times through the illegal diversion of weapons from the licit trade. As a result, small arms and light weapons now pose one of the biggest threats to the national security and economic and social development of many of our small countries. As we have repeatedly stated, small arms and light weapons have been used by those that would seek to destabilize our region through criminal networks involved in the trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings. Those activities pose a dangerous challenge to our security infrastructure and are helping to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations, as they contribute to a rise in crime, particularly violent crime.

Faced with that multifaceted threat, CARICOM States have welcomed the degrees of cooperation undertaken at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels, including through the work of the CARICOM secretariat, the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, all of which have provided assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and other agreements aimed at controlling the proliferation of those weapons.

In that context, CARICOM States welcome the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, whose first substantive session was held in June of this year. As CARICOM stated at that time, we believe that an effective, multilateral and legally binding international instrument on identifying and tracing illicit small arms and light weapons would be an important contribution to our existing national, bilateral and regional efforts to control a phenomenon that taxes our human and financial resources so heavily. CARICOM States will remain fully engaged in the deliberations of the Working Group, and we look forward to the next stage in its work. We also continue to call for progress to be made in other areas, including commitments to establish transfer controls in producer countries, the exercise of greater levels of scrutiny of end-user certificates by producer States and a real commitment to regulate brokering. Utilizing the tools currently at our disposal, and creating new ones, will ensure that combined national and collective action will enable the international community to eradicate this deadly trade.

Another issue of overriding concern to the Caribbean region remains the transhipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. CARICOM countries maintain that those shipments and the concurrent potential for accidents represent a serious threat to the economic development and security of our region. In that context, CARICOM welcomed the 2000 NPT Review Conference's explicit recognition of the concerns of small island developing States and other coastal States with regard to the transportation of radioactive materials by sea, and viewed it as an acknowledgement of the responsibility of the international community to protect the marine space of en-route coastal States from the risks inherent in the transport of those materials.

We are particularly encouraged by the ongoing efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in that regard, including the adoption of the Code of Practice on the International Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Waste and the annual resolution adopted by the IAEA General Conference on measures to strengthen international cooperation in nuclear, radiation and transport safety and waste management. We call on all States to fully implement those instruments, including the call for States shipping radioactive materials to provide assurances to potentially affected States that their national regulations take into account IAEA transport regulations and to provide relevant information relating to shipments of such materials. CARICOM States recognize the need for safety and security relating to those shipments and the right of States under article IV of the NPT to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, we affirm that those considerations should not be inimical to the sustainable development of other States.

It is clear that the international community must place renewed emphasis on the global disarmament agenda as we grapple with unresolved issues and seek ways to address new threats, including the concern that weapons of mass destruction could come into the possession of non-State actors. CARICOM States therefore also reaffirm that the time has come to take a firm decision to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We have agreed that there are many new threats confronting us, as well as old threats that continue to haunt us. It is therefore time to reaffirm our commitment to existing principles and to agree on some new strategies to address these threats.

While there is ample reason to be discouraged, it is unacceptable, and indeed impossible, for the international community to turn its back on certain disarmament issues. The previous decade was marked by increased commitments, by all Member States, to social and economic development. Yet there can be no development without security, and no security without development. We must therefore redouble our efforts in implementing both sides of the equation; otherwise we will have failed to live up to the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to remind the First Committee of the importance of maintaining silence as we listen to speakers. I would also ask that members carry out any conversations outside the room. Any conversations that must take place in the room should be conducted with the greatest respect for those who are speaking.

Ms. Mangray (Guyana): Allow me, at the outset, to express my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-ninth session. My congratulations go likewise to the other members of the Bureau. Your leadership, Mr. Chairman, will be essential to the success of our deliberations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement just made by the representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). In addition, I wish to offer a national perspective on a few points of particular interest to us.

As a small and vulnerable State, Guyana attaches importance to the system of collective security offered by the United Nations. New risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose a serious danger to international peace and security. It is only as we move beyond the prescriptions of the preliminary and procedural and as the spirit of negotiation is fully explored that we will bring about the required attitudinal shift in this body.

We are forcibly reminded that the dangers of nuclear catastrophe are still very real and present. It is impossible to guarantee, in an unstable world such as ours, that nuclear weapons will not be used either intentionally or inadvertently. Only a complete prohibition of such weapons, binding upon all States, would be able to reduce the risk of a nuclear disaster. Nuclear experiments should be harnessed only to peaceful purposes, in the service of global development.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while admittedly useful as restraints, are too limited to provide the assurance that is needed. My Government therefore urges the international community to move swiftly towards the total elimination of these weapons, coupled with an undertaking to discontinue their production.

Simultaneously, we must redouble our efforts to curb the flow of conventional weapons, which serve to fuel conflicts throughout the world.

We note with concern that the maintenance of international peace and security remains beset by many obstacles, not least of which is a lack of progress on the disarmament agenda. As I have said, that, together with new risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poses serious dangers to international peace and security.

There are today more peacekeeping operations than the international community appears able, or willing, to sustain. Increasingly, we will have to invest more in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding, but also in development, to fully address and treat the root causes of tension. That approach is valid not only in inter-State conflicts, but also in intra-State ones, which have multiplied.

The initiative undertaken by the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament are commendable. We look forward to more work being conducted in the area of disarmament and development.

We strongly support the work being done on the drafting on an international instrument on small arms and light weapons. My Government continues to be engaged in that very important process. My Government believes that, optimally, a legally binding document would ensure progressive results. Given the destructive impact of this trade, serious consideration of this subject should remain a priority in the work of the First Committee.

My delegation also welcomes the work being done to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and looks forward to the implementation of the plan of action to be produced by the Nairobi summit on a mine-free world, which is to be held in November of this year.

Above all, we must intensify our search for a collective system of security upon which all States can rely for their protection. The outline of such a system is to be found in the Charter of the United Nations. We need only to build upon it to ensure its practicality. The First Committee must vigorously reaffirm, and be cognizant of, the priorities of all Member States, especially developing countries, and of the international community at large as drafting the blueprint for future progress and development becomes increasingly important.

In conclusion, my delegation attaches great importance to reaching general agreement on how the First Committee may be transformed into a body that enjoys the confidence and support of all States. With regard to improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee, my delegation stands ready to contribute. For only through a truly collaborative and inclusive approach can we produce outcomes satisfactory to, and binding on, all Member States. Clearly, our concerns have changed to accommodate the circumstances of today's world. As we continue to serve the cause of global peace and security, the imperative for change should become irresistible.

Mr. Hannesson: (Iceland): We wish you, Mr. Chairman, the Bureau and the First Committee and its staff well in the important work ahead.

Iceland, as a member of the European Economic Area, aligned itself with the statement delivered last Monday, at our 2nd meeting, by Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. I would, however, like to add a few remarks in my own national capacity.

The First Committee has, in some ways, led the way in making concrete proposals to streamline committee work in the General Assembly and to make it more effective. I would like to express our support for improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee. We support the idea of fewer but better studies and fewer but more focused resolutions that we would have a realistic chance of following up. We also support a system by which we could decide the measures needed and how long they should take — and by which we would renew those measures if we considered them necessary in the light of experience. Furthermore, we support the proposed thematic grouping of agenda items.

So far, during the general debate, many speakers have expressed great concern with regard to the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and the real possibility that rogue States and terrorist groups could acquire such weapons. My Government believes that is an issue of central concern for world security that must be effectively addressed by the international community.

As an island State located in the middle of some of the busiest sea lanes in the world, we attach great importance to any support for the Proliferation Security Initiative, whose goal is to prevent the flow of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and related materials to and from States and non-State actors.

As we have stated often, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a fundamental pillar of arms control. It must be preserved and strengthened. Despite the lack of agreement in the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, we hope for a fruitful outcome in the Committee's work.

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Brazil, I would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I likewise wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. You have the full cooperation of the Brazilian delegation.

(*spoke in English*)

My delegation has already had an opportunity to address this body on behalf of the Rio Group. We also fully associate ourselves with the views expressed by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. During the thematic debate, the Brazilian delegation, representing the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), will specify some aspects of interest for the Group. Today I wish to highlight a few elements of the agenda that are of particular significance to Brazil.

Brazil shares the concerns expressed by various delegations during this general debate with regard to the serious threats to peace and security represented by terrorism and by the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Undoubtedly, there is widespread concern about the risk of WMDs falling into the hands of non-State actors.

In this general debate, there seems to be a growing perception that the multilateral system devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation is facing a credibility crisis. In Brazil's view, that situation stems from the fact that a lack of political commitment is perceived, especially on the part of nuclear-weapon States, with regard to the implementation of the basic understanding underlying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As the New Agenda Coalition stated earlier, Non-Proliferation-Treaty commitments cannot be complied with selectively. In that connection, Brazil — along with the overwhelming majority of other countries — believes that the only real guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again.

Brazil does not participate in any strategic alliance or security system that includes the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons. Our commitment to non-proliferation has been consistent and remains unabated. Long before its accession to the NPT, Brazil had already decided that national security should not be predicated upon the development of nuclear armaments. In the 1960s, we were involved in the negotiations that led to the creation of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in an inhabited area through the Treaty of Tlatelolco. In the 1980s, the Brazilian Constitution prohibited the use of nuclear energy for other than exclusively peaceful purposes. In the early 1990s, Brazil signed the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement with Argentina, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), placing all our nuclear facilities under comprehensive safeguards. We are active members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Ms. Aghajanian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The growing emphasis on strengthening non-proliferation mechanisms in the current international situation must be accompanied by similar efforts in terms of disarmament and enhancement of international cooperation for the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Instead, regrettably, we see that new rationales are being sought for the maintenance or development of new and more sophisticated nuclear weapons. The unfortunate consequence of such development is that countries may be led to view nuclear weapons as security enhancers.

On the issue of curbing proliferation, a number of countries believe that, by avoiding time-consuming diplomatic negotiations and resorting to arrangements of limited participation and more flexible implementation, they will address sensitive questions in a more efficient manner. Brazil believes that ad hoc mechanisms cannot replace the efficiency and legitimacy of multilaterally negotiated instruments. Mechanisms negotiated among a relatively reduced number of countries tend to hamper even further the credibility of existing instruments, which we should strive to preserve.

In May of next year, we will face the task of reviewing the implementation of the instrument devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation with the widest membership, the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite increasing signs of frustration and recent doubts in some quarters about its relevance to deal with persistent and new threats, we all agree that the NPT is a necessary instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The strength, credibility and long-term validity of the NPT depend upon a fine balance among its three pillars: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. That fundamental understanding must be upheld if we want the Treaty to remain relevant for the international community. Efforts with a view to universalizing the Treaty should also be constantly pursued. International peace and security can only benefit from the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Disregard for the provisions of article VI may ultimately affect the basic credibility of the Treaty.

At the same time, the exercise of the right of all NPT parties, without discrimination, to engage in research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes cannot be in any way jeopardized by attempts to rewrite or reinterpret article IV. In the same vein, no new obligations under article III can come into existence without a proper and explicit decision by the membership of the Treaty. Looking ahead to 2005, we are convinced that the success of the forthcoming NPT Review Conference will depend upon its ability to achieve progress in the inextricably related issues of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, while at the same time reaffirming explicitly the right of all parties to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The continued paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament has produced the regrettable perception that there is a progressive disengagement on the part of key players. The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament is to no one's benefit. Brazil is committed to the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Brazil has expressed its full support for the proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors' proposal — and has also expressed its readiness to participate in informal discussions on new issues related to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

The idea of negotiating a verifiable fissile-material treaty represents an important step in bringing the Conference on Disarmament back to the negotiations arena. At the same time, the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament is imperative in order to fulfil the mandate of the Conference.

Brazil fully supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Unfortunately, however, there seems to be no sense of urgency regarding its entry into force. We are confronted with the paradox that, while no such prospects are foreseeable, the establishment of the international monitoring system is well advanced. That system cannot function without the corresponding legal obligations it has been conceived to monitor. We call upon on all States, and particularly on those needed to bring the Treaty into force, to adhere to and promptly ratify the CTBT.

The enormous challenges confronting the First Committee call upon us to demonstrate a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to uphold the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Finally, we are convinced that the concept of disarmament is closely related to that of development. There can be no doubt, for instance, that arms expenditures divert substantial financial, material and human resources that otherwise could be invested in social programmes. In that regard, let me recall that, on 20 September, 108 countries supported the New York Declaration on the Action Against Hunger and Poverty. That Declaration encourages the international community to give careful consideration to the report prepared by Technical Group on Innovative Financing Mechanisms, which explores ways to find new resources for development. Those new and innovative financing mechanisms would raise funds urgently needed to meet the Millennium Developments Goals while complementing and ensuring stable and predictable long-term resources.

With regard to the ongoing debate on the revitalization of the First Committee, the Brazilian delegation would like to recall the comments it has already made on that issue. The reorganization of the agenda of the First Committee into a reduced number of clusters could make it more clear and understandable. The early election of the Bureau could facilitate the follow-up of agreed subjects and could allow for the convening of advanced consultations with a view to the following session. Considerations about the better use of time should be respectful of the right of delegations to express freely whatever they deem to be important, and of the need to grant to each of them the appropriate amount of time. The possibility of excluding some agenda items should be carefully examined case by case. Suggestions on the biennialization or triennialization of resolutions could come from the Chair, but decisions in that regard must be taken with the backing of Member States. Better use should be made of the provisions contained in Articles 11 and 13 of the Charter of the United Nations regarding cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Almatrafi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great pleasure to warmly congratulate Ambassador De Alba on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee for this year. I am fully confident that he will conduct the work of the Committee in the best way possible. I also wish every success to the other members of the Bureau.

Achieving international peace and security, which is the main purpose of the United Nations under its Charter, has become a matter of urgency for all nations and peoples. We believe that that purpose cannot be fulfilled through the efforts of one country or one regional group alone, but rather through reinforcing multinational diplomacy within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament

Commission and through emphasizing the role of the United Nations in dealing with issues that pose a threat to international peace and security.

My Government advocates support for the international non-proliferation and disarmament regimes established by the relevant conventions and international organizations. At the same time, we stress the importance of engaging in mutual dialogue, adopting a comprehensive and objective approach and avoiding selectivity so that we may deal effectively and efficiently with the issues on the agenda of the First Committee.

We in Saudi Arabia share the international community's concern about the risks posed by the possession and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We also believe in the need to achieve our common goal of strengthening and promoting the universality and role of international conventions on the prohibition or non-proliferation of WMDs both by States and by non-State actors. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has manifested that belief by acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions. We have also been constant participants in international efforts to promote adherence to those treaties and to advance their universality. We attach great importance to reactivating the role of those international instruments at the national level, and have done so ourselves by adopting regulations and legislation.

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Saudi National Authority, in cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, participated in a regional workshop for the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council countries, held in September 2003. The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the role of the Convention vis-à-vis the Gulf Cooperation Council. Similarly, in September of this year, our National Authority held its own training workshop on finding the best way to implement the Convention at the national level.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty provides an international framework for action to achieve the concrete success of non-proliferation policies. We believe that the best and only way to ensure that we can combat nuclear risks and eliminate proliferation is to dismantle nuclear weapons, in accordance with what was decided by the nuclear countries at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Consequently, we would like to strengthen and emphasize the Conference's Final Document, as well as to promote the purposes and objectives of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

We hope that the 2005 Review Conference will provide a good opportunity for participating countries to carry out a productive dialogue and to assess international efforts in this area. We hope that the Conference will be a success.

With regard to implementing and strengthening efforts aimed at the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, my country attaches great importance to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which called on all countries to combat and halt the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery. We hope that the resolution, as well as previous resolutions aimed at halting the proliferation of WMDs, will be respected by all countries. In that connection, we pledge our full cooperation with the Council Committee established pursuant to the resolution to follow up on implementation.

The States and peoples of the Middle East are gravely concerned about the lack of concrete success that non-proliferation policies have had in that important area of the world. Dismantling all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and nuclear weapons in particular, is a definite goal of all the countries and peoples of the region. The failure to make tangible progress in that regard, and in particular the lack of universality in the Middle East of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is rooted in Israel's continued rejection of all the resolutions and appeals of the international community and in its refusal to place all its nuclear installations under the IAEA's comprehensive safeguards regime. Israel is the sole State in the region not to have done so. Exempting Israel from international pressure to free the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction — and in particular nuclear weapons — and employing a double standard with regard to non-proliferation policies raises a significant question for the States and peoples of the region. Here in the First Committee we have spoken of the right of the people of our region to enjoy security and stability by declaring the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, like those established in other regions. We wonder why it is that Israel will not follow the example of South Africa and other countries and dismantle its nuclear arsenal in order to demonstrate its good intentions and desire for peace with its neighbours.

The international community and international organizations have a political and historical responsibility to enforce and implement all international resolutions calling for the removal of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East, and especially nuclear weapons, without discrimination or exceptions.

Our attention should also be focused on combating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which pose a grave threat to both individuals and societies. We in Saudi Arabia are working seriously and effectively to combat the proliferation of such weapons through national monitoring and controls.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate its support for the work of the First Committee in order that we may reach positive results that promote the multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament regime, with a view to achieving the lofty Charter goal of peace and security for all nations and all peoples.

Mr. Musambachime (Zambia): I would like to congratulate Ambassador De Alba and the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved election as officers of the First Committee. I wish at the outset to pledge my delegation's full cooperation. Zambia has appreciated and continues to appreciate the commitment of Ambassador De Alba's country, Mexico, to the achievement of general and complete disarmament. His well-acknowledged experience in multilateral diplomacy will undoubtedly be an asset in our efforts to steer our work to successful conclusion.

My delegation also wishes to thank Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his inspiring introductory remarks highlighting the most pressing disarmament and international security issues, which he addressed to the First Committee at its 2nd meeting, held on Monday, 4 October 2004. My delegation shares his optimism about the future and about further achievements in global disarmament. In spite of the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament, Zambia notes with satisfaction the progress made over the past year in other areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

My delegation wishes to encourage members of the Committee to approach this session with their usual professional wisdom and in full appreciation of their heavy responsibility of contributing to international peace and security. There is a need for members to strive to break the impasse in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and in the Disarmament Commission. It is the advice given by individual members of this Committee to their respective Governments that will help overcome the difficulties in the negotiations going on in those two bodies. Zambia feels that dealing first with those issues on which consensus exists could facilitate and accelerate the process.

Today my delegation will speak in broad terms on issues of general and complete disarmament and non-proliferation. Detailed interventions will be made later. My delegation welcomes the initiative to have an interactive discussion, as it will offer smaller delegations such as mine the opportunity to contribute on these important issues.

Zambia is committed to strengthening multilateralism through continued support for the existing multilateral disarmament machinery. Strong multilateral legal institutions will in fact strengthen non-proliferation efforts. Zambia has subscribed and continues to subscribe to the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which we consider to be a cornerstone of nuclear disarmament. However, my country is concerned that recent developments around the world have tended to undermine the NPT regime.

In the 36 years since the Non-Proliferation Treaty was adopted, the international community has steadily made progress in nuclear disarmament. Two reviews of the NPT, undertaken in 1995 and 2000 respectively, demonstrated the international community's consensus on the need to achieve nuclear disarmament. It is my hope that, despite difficulties, the preparations for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will continue to move forward.

The United Nations Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention, has lived up to expectations. Zambia thanks the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) for its leading role in operationalizing the Convention. My

Government wishes to further commend the United Nations Mine Action Service for maintaining close liaison with States parties. The sending of a fact-finding mission to Lusaka, Zambia's capital, in July and August of this year was highly appreciated by my Government. During that visit, UNMAS helped the Zambian Mine Action Centre to enhance its programmes, and there was an exchange of views on Zambia's participation in the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, which is scheduled to be held from 29 November to 3 December 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya.

My delegation also wishes to commend the United States Government for its continued support in the area of capacity-building at the Zambian Mine Action Centre. It is our hope that other development partners will join the United States in strengthening Zambia's capacity in addressing the problem of landmines at both national and regional levels.

Zambia is pleased to note that the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention is to be held in Africa, a continent that is heavily affected by landmines. This is a recognition of the continuing problem of landmines on our continent. In some countries, the problem of landmines dates back to the Second World War. More recently, it has been a consequence of wars of national liberation. The intra-State and inter-State conflicts of our time have also exacerbated the problem.

The First Committee is meeting at a difficult time. The catalogue of unaccomplished tasks in our efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament is very long. Accordingly, it is the view of my delegation that urgent steps need to be taken to achieve the goal we have set for ourselves.

The increase in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a threat to the survival of States. Uncontrolled access by non-State actors to these types of weapons leads to instability. Accordingly, it is extremely urgent for the international community to implement the Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001. The First Committee can do humankind a service by acting in unison to prevent terrorists from abusing the benefits of globalization to achieve their ends. The commission of violent crimes using small arms and man-portable air defence systems has resulted in death and destruction in many, many countries.

In view of those challenges to humankind, the First Committee should lead the efforts of the United Nations to reassert its authority through the universal enforcement of multilateral conventions. To achieve that, the United Nations has to strengthen multilateralism. The multilateral imperative will strengthen bilateral and collective efforts. Since most threats to international peace and security affect all countries, no country should take it upon itself alone to enforce multilateral agreements and conventions.

The Committee can contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security. In accomplishing its work, the Committee can help free up resources for human development that are now being spent on armaments. With those realities in mind, the multilateral imperative persuades us to rethink the rationale of the relationship between disarmament and development. In my Government's view, the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will effectively address all those pressing matters.

Mr. Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to congratulate Ambassador De Alba on his well deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure him of my delegation's unconditional support in ensuring the success of our work. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the delegation of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group, to which we have the honour of belonging. I shall therefore confine my statement to a few aspects of special importance to my country.

I would like to touch briefly on the three existing non-proliferation regimes and their weaknesses in terms of implementation, verification, application and universality. First, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — the most universal of the three regimes, since we are just three plus one short of universality — has no active mechanism for implementation because it has no permanent administrative body and depends exclusively on five-year review conferences. In addition, the NPT has no verification or enforcement mechanisms, with the exception of the article III requirement that States parties must sign safeguards agreements with the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Although the NPT does not confer any express mandate on the Security Council, the IAEA Statute gives the Agency's Board of Governors the power to refer cases of non-compliance with IAEA safeguards to the Security Council. Here we must point out that, even when the IAEA has referred a case to the Council, the Council took no action owing to a disagreement among the five permanent members.

Additional protocols are invaluable in guaranteeing transparency and mutual confidence, for they enable the IAEA to have recourse to the inspection of undeclared sites and to carry out more intrusive inspections. However, only 55 States have signed and ratified additional protocols, and in 46 of the 71 States that carry out significant nuclear activities additional protocols are still not in force. States that have not implemented additional protocols are avoiding the establishment of mutual confidence-building measures that are indispensable for peaceful coexistence among nations.

As a State party to the NPT we are frankly disappointed by the weak — or should I say, non-existent — commitment that has been shown so far by the nuclear Powers to fully honour their disarmament commitments under article VI of the Treaty. Our frustration is increased by the lack of progress in complying with the 13 practical steps agreed upon at the 2000 Review Conference. The intransigence of the three plus one with regard to universalizing the NPT is disconcerting and is a genuine affront to the international community. We begin with the principle that every nuclear arsenal is an inherent threat to international peace and security.

We are alarmed to note, therefore, that since the last review of the NPT some States have announced their withdrawal from the Treaty. It is imperative that, at the next Review Conference, in 2005, the international community renew its efforts to make nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and irreversible reality.

Turning to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), adopted by 144 States parties, the spectre of those proscribed weapons has reappeared because of the shortcomings of that regime, which has no system of verification or any permanent body to ensure its implementation. Nevertheless — and irrespective of any limitations that may exist in the draft BWC protocol — it certainly offers more guarantees than had already existed, and in that sense it represents a step forward. Similarly, we are encouraged that General Assembly resolution 42/37 gives the Secretary-General the power to initiate investigations on any use of biological weapons.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is the only non-proliferation regime with its own organization, with restrictions on exports of dual-use technologies and a built-in verification system, but it still remains to be universalized. Fifty-one additional members are needed. In addition, to date only 12 per cent of existing and known arsenals have been destroyed, which represents a serious compliance shortfall.

Costa Rica congratulates the Government of Sweden for creating the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, an independent international body chaired by the very well-known and experienced Hans Blix. We eagerly await its first concrete proposals designed to reduce the dangers inherent in weapons of mass destruction.

We cannot allow the existence of special exceptions to verification. Verification is inseparable from mutual confidence, and any restrictions or conditions placed upon it are a breach of confidence. In that respect, in view of the growing reluctance of some States to accept a broad verification regime, the international community should promote more binding verification processes and should make use of every avenue provided by the existing legal frameworks in the field of arms control.

As we review the Security Council's action — or should I say inaction — to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we wonder whether the Council has truly discharged its obligations and responsibilities. We are obliged to call upon the Council to comprehensively fulfil its obligations and fully shoulder its responsibilities arising from the referral processes outlined in article III, section B, paragraph 4, and article XII, section C, of the IAEA Statute, as well as in the NPT and in article VI of the CBW.

Concerning small arms and light weapons, my country reaffirms its commitment to the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Costa Rica supports the negotiation of an international instrument setting up effective mechanisms to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons.

We should ask ourselves whether the 191 States Members of the United Nations have the political will to regulate the international trade in arms in order to eradicate the transfers and sales that, owing to a lack of conscience and transparency, have irresponsibly contributed to more deaths. Over the past five decades we have never seen the Security Council act on its responsibilities arising under Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes the linkage between disarmament and development when it entrusts that body with creating systems to regulate arms in order "to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security".

In a world with finite resources, in which all States must prioritize their spending, it is incomprehensible that developing countries should spend $22 billion a year on arms when that amount would make it possible for them to achieve some of the Millennium Development Goals, such as universal primary education and reduced child mortality. The over-armament/underdevelopment dynamic is a tragic reality that is continuing to bleed many of our peoples.

The $956 billion spent globally on defence in 2003 represents more than 17 times the amount spent globally on official development assistance for development and exceeds the aggregate indebtedness of the 64 countries that make up the group of low-income countries.

History has shown us time and again that no one can achieve security by buying more weapons. Security can, however, be brought about by remedying injustices, relieving wants, following shared objectives and championing universal values. Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, we have followed a path to false security, one which has left us totally vulnerable to poverty, ignorance and disease. We have promoted a type of security that wastes the most important of our available resources and hijacks and amputates development.

In 2001 alone, 16 billion units of ammunition were manufactured: more than two bullets for each person on the planet. That means that each one of us is under the gun, and every minute of every hour of every day someone dies.

Impelled by that tragic situation, Costa Rica has been advocating the adoption by the international community of a legally binding instrument that will put an end to irresponsible sales and transfers of weapons that contribute to violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Horrified by the carnage and scandalized by the indifference to it, we firmly and enthusiastically support the proposed arms trade treaty, and we appeal to all Member States committed to transparency in arms trade and to the full respect for human rights to support that preventive instrument. The treaty would establish a series of limits on the arms trade based on existing obligations under international law and estimations of anticipated use.

It would set out existing obligations arising from the Geneva Conventions, the Mine-Ban Treaty and the Convention against Genocide, so that those criteria can be incorporated into the national legislation of each State. It is time to put an end to the irresponsible supplying of arms and to empty arsenals of illicit weapons. Seven Member States have so far publicly manifested their support for this type of initiative, and Costa Rica is pleased to be one of them.

There is no doubt that current international realities are compelling States to take additional measures to strengthen existing disarmament regimes and to take more pragmatic approaches to new challenges such as terrorism. In the realm of disarmament, vertical proliferation is of special concern. The United Nations must take the lead in preventing weapons of mass destruction — whether nuclear, chemical or biological — from falling into the hands of terrorists. We must also adopt effective mechanisms to prevent the transfer of conventional and small arms to terrorist groups.

The United Nations must take the necessary leadership role in combating international terrorism. That is why Costa Rica has proposed that the General Assembly begin an in-depth review of the various organs and mandates of the United Nations related to terrorism in order to eliminate redundancies, unify resources and centralize decision-making in a single professional, permanent and impartial organ at the very core of the organic structure of the United Nations system. We therefore propose the creation of the post of a United Nations high commissioner on terrorism.

Multilateralism is the only way to bring about general and complete disarmament. It is the basic principle underlying all negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee must result from a revitalization of the General Assembly and of the Working Group created for that purpose. Any reform of the First Committee should involve also disarmament mechanisms such as the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the Disarmament Commission in New York.

It is important that the reform process be carried out in a transparent manner, with the participation of all Member States. To that end, our country will actively participate in the informal consultations held during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Esipila (Kenya): Madam, my delegation is confident that, under your able guidance, the Committee will be able to make tangible and substantive progress in addressing the issues before us. I wish to assure you and the Bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

The current world situation remains fluid and volatile, and the threat of terrorism remains a real and present danger. In view of recent revelations of widespread underground and possibly terrorist-linked arms operations, it behooves us to take determined action to address this menace. The ever-present danger of the possibility of weapons of mass destruction falling into non-State hands adds urgency to the international community's efforts to strengthen multilateral legally binding agreements with the necessary verification provisions.

The Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region is especially vulnerable to the threat posed by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons, which have escalated the conflicts in the region. Ongoing conflicts have resulted in massive numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. These, in turn, have placed unprecedented strain on the resources of the region and, indeed, led to reversals in economic development.

It is against that background that Kenya welcomed the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group to negotiate an international instrument on marking and tracing such weapons. Kenya supports regional efforts to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 International Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons and notes the critical role of international assistance for the implementation of the Programme.

Kenya is a key player in subregional efforts to combat trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In May 2000 Kenya hosted the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Conference, which culminated in the signing of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Consequently, the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons was signed on 21 April last, and it remains the only binding instrument on small arms in the region. States parties signatories to the Protocol are expected to ratify it no later than 31 December this year.

Kenya wishes to urge the international community to support the Nairobi secretariat in the implementation of the Protocol. The secretariat is actively involved in spearheading the anti-personnel arms and light weapons offensive as well as preparations for the 2006 United Nations Review Conference.

I join my dear colleague from Zambia in reiterating that anti-personnel landmines are among the most inhumane of all weapons devised by man. They not only maim and kill innocent civilians but also directly contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and underdevelopment in the affected regions. It was therefore with a sigh of relief that the States parties negotiated the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention — and ensured its entry into force in March 1999. The Convention is the most successful global disarmament and humanitarian treaty and has been ratified by over 140 States.

The consequent successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held at Bangkok from 15 to 19 September 2003, was a testament to the importance attached by the world community to the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

As with other disarmament efforts, the fight against the scourge of landmines has been most successfully fought under regional and international umbrellas. Kenya therefore welcomes the adoption of the Common African Position on anti-personnel landmines, adopted last month in New York during the African Union Ministerial Meeting. The Common

African Position identified priority action areas on which Africa should focus, such as mobilization of resources to clear mined areas and assistance to mine victims, among others.

The Ottawa Convention is approaching a watershed in its implementation. Kenya will be hosting the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, also known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, from 29 November to 3 December this year. Kenya attaches great importance to this important gathering, which will take stock of the progress made since the entry into force of the Convention in 1999 and set the agenda for action over the next five years to ensure that the humanitarian objectives of the Convention are met. The Conference will thus be a crucial milestone in the operationalization of the Convention.

We wish to thank all those that have contributed to the hosting of the 2004 Nairobi Summit and invite all States and interested organizations to participate at the highest level.

Nuclear weapons remain a global challenge. In that regard, Kenya believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a cornerstone on which nuclear disarmament should be founded. Kenya urges the universal application of the strengthened safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), especially the Additional Protocol. The 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should be an occasion to reassess the implementation of the NPT, taking into consideration the security benefits that would accrue to all Member States upon its successful implementation.

The Chairman returned to the Chair.

Kenya remains concerned that a fissile material cut-off treaty has yet to be negotiated and that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. Kenya also attaches great importance to the successful implementation of both the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

In a fluid and volatile world, the role of the United Nations is coming under even closer scrutiny, as are the roles of the Committees of the General Assembly. Scrutiny of the United Nations and of the First Committee will of necessity take into consideration the extent to which the Committee is able to meet the aspirations of its members to the achievement of collective security. We look forward to working constructively with all delegations on practical ways in which to achieve our common goal.

Mr. Alnajar (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. We are convinced that, thanks to your wisdom and political and diplomatic experience, we will make further progress and attain the objectives to which we aspire. I have the honour to work with you as Rapporteur of the First Committee, representing the Group of Asian States.

Yemen reaffirms its resolve to make every effort to safeguard international peace and security. My country will never hesitate to sign, endorse and ratify relevant international treaties and disarmament instruments aimed at preventing and monitoring proliferation; that also applies to all counter-terrorism instruments. We are firmly convinced that such instruments are essential for the creation of suitable conditions for achieving international peace and security, particularly in the light of the accelerated developments and changes and the acts of violence and terrorism that have occurred on the international scene in the last few years. What I have said reflects our clear political vision for supporting the disarmament efforts of the international community's and of the United Nations as contained in the Final Document of the 1978 special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

We support the conclusions of the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and we have supported all efforts to draft such an international instrument. Yemen believes that the desired objective is to protect humanity from the scourge of small arms and light weapons, which are no less dangerous than the threat of the use of nuclear weapons or the possibility that weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of terrorists. Our political leadership attaches paramount importance to the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This problem has various complex dimensions in which multiple historical considerations and consequences of the colonial periods and the armed conflicts prevailed in parts of the country, in addition to the social characteristics of the people of Yemen.

We have no time to review here the various measures taken by Yemen; these were set out in the national report submitted at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group, held in New York in 2001. The Government of Yemen implemented a programme to buy back weapons held by civilians and arms merchants in the amount of approximately $10 million. That effort was successful, thanks to the assistance of our friends. We used every medium at our disposal — radio, television and newspapers — to strengthen awareness and a culture that does not promote the use of small weapons and to encourage the people to turn in their weapons. Civil society organizations have played an important role in that programme. We also attended the Conference on the Implementation, by the Arab States, of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in Cairo under the auspices of the United Nations and the League of Arab States. We would like to participate in the first review conference, which will be held in Algeria in 2005.

Yemen is among the countries that have suffered from the proliferation of anti-personnel mines. We were among the first to ratify the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On Their Destruction. Yemen's demining programme was one of the most successful in our region.

Despite the international community's efforts to turn the Middle East into a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, we must note that Israel possesses both kinds of weapons outside the context of international monitoring, which poses a grave threat to regional and international security. That violates all relevant international laws and resolutions, which call upon Israel to accede to the international conventions in this area. We appeal to the international community to compel Israel to unconditionally join the NPT and to open its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguard regimes of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

My country supports all efforts and proposals aimed at improving the work of the First Committee, in the context of restructuring and reforming the United Nations bodies to ensure the greater effectiveness of its disarmament efforts and international peace. We should like to join others in reiterating that the key to successful reform is political will. Without that, reform can have very limited success.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that uniting our efforts to reaffirm the principles of the Charter and to increase economic and development assistance to the poorest and least developed countries is the best way in which to ensure international peace and security.

Mr. Sharma (India): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

India is firmly committed to multilateralism and to the primacy of multilateral institutions, processes and instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We believe in the need to revitalize and strengthen the authority and the role of the General Assembly, including its Main Committees. Assembly resolution 58/316 provides the parameters within which we could move in that direction. The effective implementation of the resolutions adopted on the recommendation of the First Committee would make the Committee more productive in providing guidance and direction to other multilateral efforts in the area of arms control and disarmament.

Member States have varying security concerns and priorities, and the First Committee provides them with a forum in which they can outline them to the international community through general statements, thematic interventions and draft resolutions. Any attempt to limit this opportunity will reduce the First Committee's relevance, especially to the States Members of the United Nations that are not represented in the Conference on Disarmament.

The current agenda of the First Committee is derived from the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which enjoys consensus support and reflects a delicate balance in addressing the security concerns of all Member States. Any piecemeal approach to changing the agenda of the First Committee or altering its priorities would erode that consensus and could even paralyse the working of the First Committee.

The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work is a reflection of the current lack of global consensus on the goals and priorities of the disarmament and arms control agenda. It is also a manifestation of the lack of political will on the part of major players to address the issues that are of concern to other Member States, including the issue of nuclear disarmament. India has shown considerable flexibility with a view to enabling the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work that is balanced and comprehensive. The absence of agreement on an agenda for the Disarmament Commission is a result of the same malaise that is afflicting the Conference on Disarmament. The international community has a collective interest in preserving and strengthening all elements of the institutional triad of disarmament: the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. India remains committed to contributing to that goal.

There is growing concern about the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, related materials and technology, particularly their possible acquisition by non-State actors. India shares those concerns. We believe that States have a responsibility to take measures to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials and technology and their spread to both non-State actors and other States. Aware of its responsibilities arising from the possession of nuclear weapons, India has put in place legislative and administrative measures, including export controls, in this regard. Our record in preventing proliferation is impeccable.

It has become evident that the current nuclear non-proliferation regime is facing major challenges. We need to create a more inclusive and non-discriminatory structure to effectively address current proliferation concerns.

The focus on pursuing the goals of non-proliferation without progress towards global and complete nuclear disarmament may be detrimental and counterproductive. Measures aimed at expanding or perpetuating the existing regimes for export control and technology denial will hinder the peaceful application of nuclear technologies and reinforce the existing divide between nuclear and non-nuclear States by creating a new class of haves and have-nots.

The peaceful use of nuclear energy, including for electricity generation, remains crucial to the economic and social development of many developing and developed countries. It can provide environmentally sustainable energy security. The need for ensuring access to nuclear technologies and materials for peaceful purposes is, therefore, as important as preventing the proliferation of sensitive technologies and materials.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, accidentally or inadvertently, will remain. Only global and complete nuclear disarmament, within a time-bound framework, can totally eliminate the danger of a nuclear war. That was the cornerstone of India's Action Plan for the elimination of nuclear weapons unveiled by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and it continues to be the India's abiding objective today.

While pursuing the goal of nuclear disarmament, it is desirable to take immediate steps to reduce nuclear danger. These could include measures to de-alert and de-target nuclear weapons; and legally binding commitments on no first use of nuclear weapons and on the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Simultaneously, we need to evolve a new global order based on cooperative security and multilateralism. Addressing the legitimate security concerns of States may help in creating an environment conducive to achieving global disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

The growing danger of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction, related materials and technologies has added a new and more menacing dimension to the traditional danger of nuclear war. The international community has demonstrated the will to confront this danger. This was manifested in the adoption by consensus by the General Assembly during the previous two sessions of resolutions, sponsored by India, on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and by the adoption by the Security Council this year of its resolution 1540 (2004). India is presenting such a draft resolution again to reaffirm the commitment of the international community to take measures to combat this danger.

The new challenges can be effectively dealt with only through truly universal and non-discriminatory regimes, such as the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and by building on them.

There is a need to strengthen international norms against biological weapons. India is committed to the current process of annual meetings of experts and States parties of the BWC to consider specific topics. The 2006 Review Conference will provide an opportunity to put in place mechanisms to further strengthen that instrument and to address in parallel the threat of use of biological weapons by non-State actors.

India's commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention is evident in its exemplary performance in meeting its targets for destruction before the prescribed deadline. We have a collective stake in ensuring that the provisions of the Convention are implemented fully and effectively.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons not only poses a threat to the security of States but also endangers their socio-economic and political stability. The impact of the illicit trade in small arms is aggravated by its links to organized crime, terrorism and trafficking in narcotics. We hope that the United Nations Programme of Action is fully implemented. Commendable progress in negotiations on an instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons has been made. The Second Biennial Meeting of States, to be held in 2005, will provide a useful opportunity to review the progress so far in implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action.

Agreement on a new Protocol on explosive remnants of war under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCWC) shows that multilateral negotiations can achieve significant results provided there is political will. India had the privilege of chairing the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts of the States Parties to the CCWC in 2002 and 2003. India continues to coordinate the Working Group on Explosive Remnants of War, which is deliberating on preventive technical measures and on the implementation of international humanitarian law in the context of explosive remnants of war.

The success of the First Committee will be measured not by how short our statements have become, how the number or the length of the draft resolutions adopted have been reduced or how free and interactive our debates are, but by whether all of these propel the multilateral disarmament forums towards re-engagement and productive discussions and negotiations.

It is our hope that deliberations during the current session of the First Committee and the resolutions that we shall adopt will together provide an impetus to elaborating a global consensus for meeting contemporary challenges, including threats to international security, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the moribund status of multilateral disarmament negotiations.

Mr. Oklo (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We assure you of our full cooperation. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the important statement he made at the opening of our Committee's work and for the great efforts he is making as head of his Department.

Along with so many other delegations that have spoken since the beginning of this session, the delegation of Congo is deeply concerned about the disarmament process and by the threat still posed to humanity by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) 26 years after the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

Congo is also concerned about the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which is the only multilateral framework for negotiations on disarmament. For the seventh consecutive year, it has been unable to adopt a programme of work. Congo would like to state clearly that the goals of disarmament are far from being reached, while the challenges facing us are growing, particularly with the surge in international terrorism.

We also reiterate that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain priority issues of international peace and security. From that perspective, it is vital for all of us to accede to the international instruments on disarmament. In order to be effective and to fully play their role, multilateral regimes must enjoy the support of their States parties. This is why the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must be a success in order to preserve the validity of the treaty.

We must also work together to ensure the universalization of instruments, relating to disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and putting an end to the arms race. My country signed the NPT on 23 October 1978, and it appeals to countries not yet having done so to sign it as soon as possible.

The entire disarmament structure must rest upon a respect for commitments undertaken and for the resulting obligations. This is to say that the prospect of developing new nuclear weapons as well as the lack of commitment by the nuclear Powers to an irreversible process of nuclear disarmament are factors that destabilize everything being developed in this realm. We therefore appeal once again to the nuclear Powers to shoulder the responsibilities incumbent upon them by virtue of their status, to honour the commitments they undertook during the 2000 NPT Review Conference and to unambiguously carry out the destruction of their arsenals. A world free from the threat of nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons and, indeed, weapons of any kind is not just a dream. It can become a reality if we actually do something about it. In this context, multilateralism is the only approach to problems of disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and threats to international security.

Regarding small arms and light weapons, my delegation duly appreciates the many initiatives that have been taken at various levels to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in such weapons. I give the example, for instance, of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, whose first substantive session was held from 14 to 25 June 2004 in New York, with the participation of 106 States and 62 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This is a step in the right direction, which could be decisive in combating and eliminating the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In Africa, as everyone knows, the weapons used in killings every day are not biological or chemical in nature, but simply small arms and light weapons. That is why my delegation would like the Committee to attach the greatest importance to the process under way on this issue in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects adopted by the United Nations Conference on that subject and in preparing the conference to be held in 2006 to assess the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Turning to anti-personnel landmines, another matter that causes untold suffering in Africa, we are happy to see that there are more and more States parties to that convention, 143 at this stage. This is an opportunity for my country to welcome the harmonizing of the African position on this issue before the Review Conference to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004. We are sure that the Conference will lend new momentum to efforts to make the Ottawa Convention truly universal.

We realize that we must combine our efforts if we wish to limit — even in a small way — the number of threats that hang over our countries. The countries of Central Africa are thus trying to organize to create conditions conducive to stabilizing the region, which has been plagued by high tensions in recent years. We cannot fail to mention here the important role, in this respect, played by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in maintaining an ongoing and productive dialogue among Central African countries.

Congo has suffered through the sad experience of a civil war, and we attach the greatest importance to regional and subregional confidence-building measures, since through these measures we can develop synergy that will contribute to creating a climate of trust and cooperation. This is why we regularly seek to improve good-neighbourly relations and cooperation with all the States of the Central African subregion, in particular in terms of combating terrorism. It is in that spirit that my country will actively participate in the international conference on the Great Lakes region, which is to be held in Tanzania in November. We call upon the international community to support the conference.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms that there are no small steps forward in terms of disarmament. Every single step counts, and that is why my delegation supports all international, regional and national efforts to bring about security for all.

Mr. Maandi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I am particularly gratified to see you, Sir, with your excellent diplomatic skills, chairing the First Committee. I take this opportunity to congratulate you most warmly and to wish you good luck in the difficult task ahead of you. You may rest assured that my delegation will support you fully. My congratulations go also to all the other members of the Bureau. I would like further to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Sareva, for the remarkable manner in which he led the work of the Committee during the previous session.

Multilateral disarmament diplomacy is in crisis. The multilateral mechanisms that were created to avert threats posed by weapons to international peace and security are paralysed. Similarly, the authority of the treaties and conventions on abolishing nuclear, biological and chemical weapons is seriously at risk. Mistaken interpretation, selective implementation and non-respect for treaties are shaking the pillars of the entire disarmament architecture.

It would be unforgivable if the effort to disarm and the task of eliminating weapons of mass destruction were to stop at combating horizontal proliferation. To say otherwise would be, in our view, to accept a paradigm that is as absurd as it is dangerous. To pretend otherwise would be to trivialize weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to ignore their genuine dangers.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are interdependent and inseparable. Unbalanced treatment of either of those dimensions would enable those deadly weapons to overcome our efforts and the threat would become worse and worse; and, what is even more dangerous, it would send the very dangerous and risky message that nuclear weapons are useful.

Respect for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at the next Review Conference will be crucial. That means, for all of us, the full implementation of all its provisions. That is how we understand the Treaty. It would also respect both the letter and the spirit of the Treaty. The Treaty does not in any way provide for a division of the world between those who have nuclear weapons and those who do not. It surely does not tolerate military doctrines which give nuclear weapons pride of place and a strategic position. Possessing such weapons is not an enduring right, but their elimination is a binding legal obligation whose fulfilment cannot be indefinitely postponed. The extension of the NPT does not in any way authorize indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.

Eliminating nuclear weapons would respond to the pressing need to promote universal and non-discriminatory collective security. That means going beyond competition among nuclear Powers and giving genuine expression to the unanimously accepted principle of full security for all. The implementation of that principle cannot be secured either by the eternal possession of nuclear weapons or by horizontal or vertical proliferation.

A sound, rigourous analysis of international relations today would call on us to move away from a military orientation and adopt a revamped strategic approach that would spell the end of the obsolete and anachronistic doctrine of nuclear deterrence and that would discourage any trend towards military supremacy, hegemony or domination. International realities today confirm the relevance of a comprehensive, integrated approach to disarmament, show the validity of the philosophy that has always guided us in this field and highlight the need for general and complete disarmament, with high priority for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In order to attain that goal, multilateralism must be rehabilitated in order to deal with the issue of disarmament. Fragmentary, often selective, approaches have shown their inadequacy. The holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is therefore a matter of urgency. The Disarmament Commission must be set free from all constraints so that it can discharge its mandate as defined in General Assembly decision 52/492.

The NPT regime must be preserved, and the balance between the rights and the obligations of States parties must be maintained. It is incumbent primarily upon nuclear States to implement article VI of the NPT by pursuing negotiations in good faith for the total elimination of nuclear weapons as stated in the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and to meet their commitment to fully eliminate their nuclear arsenals, a commitment undertaken at the sixth Review Conference, held in 2000.

For this we must disencumber the Conference on Disarmament, the sole international negotiating body in the field of disarmament, which remains hostage to certain narrow national interests and the desire to preserve national security at the expense of the interests of all. It must be allowed to adopt a comprehensive approach in order to consider substantive questions and address both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The proposal made by the representatives of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden — the five ambassadors' proposal — which enjoys wide support, provides a solid, balanced basis on which to help the Conference on Disarmament out of this deadlock, which has lasted far too long.

Confronting nuclear weapons requires universality for NPT and the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The world would be a safer place with the full elimination of biological and chemical weapons stockpiles, which are similarly threatening and deadly. The universalization of and respect for the Conventions on the elimination of biological and chemical weapons remains one of our goals.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. That said, the lack of progress in the field of nuclear disarmament cannot in any way serve as a pretext for the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation is not in anyone's interest and it must be brought under control. Furthermore, the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction has now acquired an entirely new dimension: the possibility that terrorist networks are illicitly trading in nuclear technologies and materials that could be used for the production of weapons of mass destruction is a grave threat for all of us. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) was adopted to meet that threat. It proposed a series of measures to protect us against the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist groups. By shouldering that responsibility, the Security Council acted in an exceptional manner. It indicated that at the same time, in parallel to the implementation of that resolution, an intergovernmental process should be initiated and carried through with a view to the adoption of an international legal instrument on this matter.

Resolution 1540 (2004) should be confined to filling the gaps in international law with respect to the relationship between weapons of mass destruction and non-State actors. It should not serve to weaken international regimes created by extant treaties. Having said that, the most effective way of combating weapons of mass destruction is, of course, to eliminate them completely.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a disarmament and non-proliferation measure can help to strengthen the NPT regime and consolidate international peace and security. The establishment of such a zone in the Middle East depends on whether Israel — the only country in the region that is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — decides to eliminate its nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and to place its nuclear installations under the IAEA safeguards regime.

Israel's nuclear capability, the lack of progress in creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and policies based on double standards are of serious concern to us.

The international community has long been aware of the lethal effect of the accumulation of weapons and called for disarmament as a key pillar of a new international system security. That appeal has become ever more relevant given the many complex threats and challenges confronting humankind today, which make it clear that a prosperous and safe world can be built only on security policies that do not give pride of place to weapons or promote the arms race.

The need for general and complete disarmament, to which we strongly aspire, is based on the firm conviction that one cannot respond to a potential threat to national security with nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which pose an actual threat. It is also based on the conviction that the world would be a better place and better able to meet new and urgent challenges if the vast resources that would be freed up by ending the arms race were channeled into economic and social development and into increasing well-being at the international level.

Algeria fully supports that vision and for that reason has joined in the varied efforts to bring about disarmament — nuclear, chemical, biological or conventional. We once again displayed our resolute commitment to disarmament in August 2004 by ratifying the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms additional to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We will publicly destroy part of our landmine stock in the days to come.

It is also in that spirit that my country expects to host in 2005 the Regional Conference of the League of Arab States on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. That Conference is an initiative to strengthen the process of combating the dangerous phenomenon of the illicit trade in small arms, whose destabilizing effects pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

Algeria has always sincerely advocated dialogue and cooperation and endeavoured to strengthen security within the traditional frameworks of membership and solidarity. It is working, together with the other countries of the region, to create an area in the Maghreb that is stable, united, homogenous and prosperous; that is fully involved in the process of the settlement of African conflicts; that participates in reinforcing security and cooperation among the countries of our African continent; and that contributes to efforts to make the Mediterranean an area of peace, cooperation and prosperity.

Ms. Al-Mulla (Kuwait): Allow me to extend our congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship and to the members of the Bureau of this very important Committee. On another professional and personal note, I should like to congratulate you on the fact that, for the first time, a woman — Ms. Cheryl Stoute — is Committee Secretary.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Let me express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe for his statement at the beginning of the general debate of the Committee, in which he focused on the very important issues and challenges faced by the international community in the field of disarmament. I wish to express to him our appreciation for all the efforts made by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in strengthening international cooperation and helping to implement all the relevant resolutions and programmes of action.

Kuwait believes in the central role of the United Nations in tackling the major challenges faced by the international community, foremost among which are terrorism and the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as hunger, poverty and the spread of serious diseases such as AIDS and malaria, which afflict the developing countries in particular.

There is indeed a link between such challenges. Security and development are interrelated, and it is difficult to advance in one area if there has been no progress in the other. Means of tackling such issues have been clearly delineated in many conventions, treaties, programmes of action and resolutions adopted at international conferences and meetings held in the past few years.

Members must now implement their commitments, pledges and cooperation through existing mechanisms or work to improve such mechanisms in order to achieve greater effectiveness in their implementation.

At a time when the international community is fully realizing the threats posed by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to international peace and security, the required progress to eliminate such threats has not been made because of a lack of political will on the part of certain parties and States and their failure to observe international treaties — something which makes it all the more important to continue our efforts and to take measures to build confidence in order to realize our common objective: a world in which peace and security prevail and that is free of such lethal weapons.

Kuwait believes that such weapons pose a grave and serious threat and need to be dismantled, and accordingly has acceded to numerous conventions and treaties — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the Chemical Weapons Convention; the Biological Weapons Convention; a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), together with its Additional Protocol on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Given our strong belief in the importance of nuclear security, last year we signed the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. In that respect, we urge all States that have not concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA to do so, and we encourage those States that have concluded a safeguards agreement with the IAEA but have not signed the Additional Protocol to do so as well.

We likewise hope that all parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will observe their commitments as stipulated in the Treaty and in their comprehensive safeguards agreements. We hope that they will cooperate closely with the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resolve any questions that may be asked, or doubts raised, about their programmes, through dialogue and constructive negotiations.

Similarly, we call on Israel, the only State in the Middle East that has not yet acceded to the NPT and that possesses nuclear weapons, to stop flouting international law and relevant resolutions and appeals, to heed the calls of the international community to immediately accede to the Treaty, to dismantle its nuclear stockpiles and to subject all of its nuclear installations to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA. Israel's position destabilizes the balance of power in the Middle East and is a cause of constant concern. We call on the international community to cease forthwith the selling of technology and scientific materials that might promote Israel's nuclear programme or that of any other State that seeks to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

We support the July 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the non-use of nuclear weapons in armed conflict. We believe an agreement should be developed to effectively protect non-nuclear States from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Kuwait maintains that it is high time to take the crucial and fateful political decisions necessary to reinforcing existing international resolutions so that our world may be free from WMDs. We therefore call on States possessing nuclear weapons to take the necessary steps to prohibit nuclear proliferation and to dismantle those weapons. This is a key aspect in this respect.

We reiterate our support for the elaboration of a non-discriminatory multilateral treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Although an agenda was not agreed upon during last April's meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, we hope that procedures and measures will be adopted at the Conference to strengthen the NPT with a view to attaining its purposes.

As regards the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we call on the Member States that have not acceded to that Treaty to do so. This call is directed in particular to the 11 countries whose accession is necessary for the CTBT to enter into force. We call on the nuclear Powers to suspend all nuclear tests until the Treaty enters into force.

Kuwait welcomes Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which prohibits the proliferation of WMDs and their materials and their possession by terrorist groups. The relevant authorities in Kuwait have imposed the regulations and legislation necessary to implement that resolution. We believe that strengthening the control and verification mechanisms, as stipulated in most of the international conventions on WMDs and making those conventions universal by acceding to them and abiding by them is the best way to combat the spread of such weapons. Reinforcing control and verification mechanisms must be supported by any means possible.

As regards the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, Kuwait supports efforts aimed at implementing the Programme of Action on Small Arms. We welcome the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group to negotiate a legal instrument on identifying and tracing small arms and light weapons, whose spread has long fanned the flames of many conflicts. These conflicts have claimed thousands of victims and have halted the momentum for development, especially in developing countries.

Finally, Kuwait supports the efforts to improve the working methods of the First Committee. This should be a continuous process. We emphasize the importance of ensuring that reform of the work of the Committee forms part of our efforts to reform the work of the General Assembly as a whole. Consultations on reform should be transparent and comprehensive and should aim, first and foremost, at reaching consensus. Focusing on procedures and methods of work should not take place at the expense of content, since in the absence of the political will necessary to implement resolutions, any efforts aimed at reforming and improving our methods of work will have no substantive impact on the efforts to achieve complete disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Permanent Observer of the Holy See and the representatives of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization have asked to make statements. If there is no objection, I will invite those three representatives to make their statements.

I give the floor first to the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Pfirter (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): First of all, allow me to say how grateful I am to the members of the First Committee for having been kind enough to grant me the opportunity to address the Committee.

Allow me to start also by extending my warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, the body that has historically been linked with the Chemical Weapons Convention and with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) since its inception. The First Committee of the General Assembly is a reliable barometer both of the current state of play and of emerging trends in multilateral disarmament, and in that sense its deliberations are of paramount importance, as indeed they are in the field of non-proliferation.

At the same time, I wish to express my personal satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, a good friend and a representative of Mexico, at the helm. We do not forget the distinguished services your nation has offered in the cause of disarmament. From the nuclear test ban to our own field of chemical weapons, Mexican inspiration, ideas and tenacity have always been present. It was also my privilege, wearing a different hat, to be the one who deposited in Mexico my country's instrument of ratification of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Two years have passed since I came here for the first time as the new Director-General of an organization that, in spite of its youth, had had to face significant challenges. Today, I can report that the OPCW is moving decisively from being a new organization still in the early stages of fulfilling its mandate to being a mature one with a solid and widely recognized record of achievement and the increasing support of the international community. Indeed, the OPCW has just completed 100,000 inspector-days, having inspected more than 750 facilities of various types in 65 States parties. We are also close to conducting our two-thousandth inspection.

The verification regime set out in the Convention is said to be the most complex and ambitious in the history of multilateral disarmament. We inspect former chemical weapons production facilities as well as destruction and storage facilities; but we also monitor the chemical industry, in a gigantic effort that demands a skilled and well trained inspection force — and, of course, the close and active collaboration of the chemical industry around the globe. All those factors — State and private — converge in the successful delivery of our unique programme of disarmament, non-proliferation and international cooperation — the three so-called pillars of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

I indicated last year that, as a result of the First Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to review the operation of the Convention, two action plans had been adopted: one on national implementation of the Convention, the other on its universality. Significant progress has been made on both fronts. With regard to national implementation, our States parties decided to set themselves a deadline of November 2005 for taking stock of how much progress they have made in developing and enacting the national legislation mandated by the Convention and in establishing the required internal mechanisms.

As members know, the Convention is not a self-executing treaty, and it therefore requires that States parties take a number of steps at the national level both to make it operational and to enforce its provisions. Our assessment so far is that much more needs to be done before we reach a stage that can be deemed satisfactory. Many member States — more than half of our membership — are still lagging behind both in terms of implementing and enforcing national legislation and customs controls and in other important areas. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to appeal once more to all member States for full implementation, and to reiterate that we are ready and willing to provide all the necessary assistance, through our implementation-support programmes, to all those who request it.

With regard to universality, we have also made significant progress, and the news is encouraging. I am pleased to report that the OPCW now comprises 166 member States, and the list of States not party to the Convention is getting tantalizingly smaller.

Since we last visited this Committee, last year, the Convention has been strengthened by the accession of many countries, including the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which last December acknowledged that it possessed chemical weapons. Since its accession, Libya has started disarming under the round-the-clock supervision of our international inspectorate. It has done so in exemplary fashion. Soon, our Executive Council will consider a request by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for conversion of a former chemical weapons production facility, which, if the Executive Council approves the request — as I personally expect it will — will be used to produce pharmaceuticals in the service of Africa and other developing countries in some key and challenging areas. With its accession, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the neighbouring region and the Middle East as a whole have become safer.

Iraq has also recently indicated to us formally its political commitment to the Convention and the decision of the Interim Iraqi Government to prepare the ground for early accession to the Convention once the newly elected Government takes office next year. That is also extremely important, and we remain ready to support and advise Iraq in the process towards full accession.

Important progress has also been registered in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean. A few States remain outside the realm of the Convention, and we sincerely hope it will be possible for them to join us in the near future.

Justified concerns remain about the Korean peninsula and the Middle East, where large and long-standing conflicts persist. Many believe that we should give up on those regions and let the situation evolve towards a point, in some distant future, when accession to the Convention will no longer be a problem, because all problems will have been resolved. That is logic that is, I am afraid, far from our thinking. Adherence to the Convention would constitute, in any area in the world fraught with tension, a significant confidence-building gesture and encouragement towards peace and ultimate solutions to the problems. I believe that no one can expect any sympathy or understanding towards those who decide to keep the use of chemical-weapons as an open option, when the enormous majority of mankind, the broad membership of the United Nations, has already declared those weapons illegal.

Chemical weapons are a heinous means of terror and destruction, aimed at and useful only against unprotected civilians. They have been proscribed by a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory Convention. What could really justify refraining from joining this treaty, which is in favour of humanity?

Destruction of chemical weapons continues under the verification regime set out in the Convention. Six declared possessor States parties have, to date, declared more than 71,000 tons of chemical agents and nearly 8.7 million munitions and containers. In the United States of America, more than 30 per cent of the arsenal has been destroyed, and new destruction facilities are coming on line in a commendable effort to meet the strict deadlines set out in the Convention.

India is fast approaching the point at which it will have destroyed fully 80 per cent of its stockpiles, and its destruction campaign is thus running ahead of schedule. For that, India has gained the praise of all States members of the OPCW.

The Russian Federation, which possesses the largest known arsenal of chemical weapons in the world, is now moving ahead after some initial delays, thanks to the resolve of its Government and the essential support of the international community through important initiatives such as the Global Partnership. It is true that much more needs to be done in Russia as we move towards the strict deadlines set out in the Convention for the overall destruction process.

Albania has declared a small arsenal, inherited from the cold war days. We have started working with the Albanian authorities and hope that everything will soon be in place for a smooth and short destruction campaign.

The case of Libya has already been referred to.

As I stated, the deadlines set out in the Convention are fast approaching, and this means that the number of destruction facilities will grow in the near future. It also means that States parties need to accelerate — in some cases decisively — the march towards compliance with their obligations under the Convention. That will in turn require a concomitant increase in verification activity by the OPCW Technical Secretariat, as we see to it that we are present at all the required stages of destruction and can thus provide the full assurances the international community needs, in the sense that disarmament by possessor States is indeed complete and irreversible.

We are also continuing our efforts with industry verification, bearing in mind that the non-proliferation

of chemical weapons is another key part of our mandate. Indeed, it is the long-term mandate. In that area, we are also taking steps to ensure that no deviation from legitimate uses is possible. That work is especially important, given the present security situation and the ever-present threat of chemical terrorism.

In this regard let me say that we have continued to contribute to the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council. The Chemical Weapons Convention is not an anti-terrorist instrument, yet the OPCW and the Convention itself quite clearly have a role to play in the overall global struggle of the international community against terrorism. Last year I indicated that we were ready to play our role, in line with Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001). We have also noted with satisfaction that, by adopting its resolution 1540 (2004) this past April, on the prevention of access by non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction, the Security Council explicitly recognized the role and responsibilities of the OPCW in the important domain of the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, and, in particular, the struggle against terrorism. The resolution enhances our own responsibility in that crucial task and universalizes many of the obligations already present in the Convention.

Responding to a letter from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), His Excellency Mr. Mihnea Ioan Motoc of Romania, I have confirmed our readiness to provide any technical assistance and advice that are required. The Technical Secretariat of the OPCW is fully at the disposal of the Committee, which, I am convinced, could benefit highly from our practical experience after seven years of verification activity.

In the same spirit, we have continued our ongoing close cooperation with the United Nations through the Department for Disarmament Affairs, now firmly established under the leadership of Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe. In the past year we have not only consulted frequently with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, but have also cooperated in the field through our regular participation in meetings organized by it or by the United Nations regional centres.

The relationship still has room to grow, and we intend to build even closer links with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and international organizations, as was restated by the Secretary-General and by me only a few minutes ago, during our meeting. We are doing this, in particular, in the fight against international terrorism and in the sphere of non-proliferation, where we have detected a keen interest, spurred by genuine need, in joining forces against that new challenge to international peace and security.

Like the struggles for liberty and justice, the pursuit of peace requires our constant dynamic and proactive attention. In our humble way, we must make our contribution and at all times pursue the goal of international peace and security through disarmament, non-proliferation and international cooperation.

The OPCW is playing its mandated role in this effort, by pursuing both the prohibition of chemical weapons everywhere and their elimination from the face of the Earth. We will persist in that crucial task until we have achieved the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I am certain that the First Committee will consider in detail the progress of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the days to come.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): Mr. Chairman, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you and the rest of the Bureau upon your election.

We are now on the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The ideals embodied in the Charter — seeking peace through international organization and cooperation — have been a source of hope through the years. Those ideals ought to animate us as much now as they did in 1945. But lately, a sense of fear seems to cloud our vision — fear of terrorist attacks, fear of new wars, fear of a breakdown in the processes of international law. A sign of this fear is the surge in global military spending. Many States are increasing their spending, because they think that larger arsenals of firepower will provide security. Increased reliance on guns, large and small, is leading the world away from, not towards, security.

A clear result of such overspending on the instruments of death is that Governments are much less

able to meet long-term commitments to education, health care and housing. The Millennium Development Goals are left lagging while military priorities claim scarce funds.

The United Nations pioneered studies which show the integral relationship among disarmament, development and security. Security for all is enhanced when disarmament and development steps complement one another. We must emphasize the economic benefits of disarmament measures. Development alternatives to militarism must be the constant work of the First Committee.

It certainly cannot be said that poverty leads directly to terrorism, but it is true that terrorists exploit conditions of poverty in ways that produce heightened conflict and violence. The terrorists use an array of weapons to kill, maim and slaughter. Their global reach means that those weapons are being produced and sold internationally, on black markets as well as by State sponsors. In conjunction with the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, States must look for ways to reduce the easy availability of those weapons through increased export controls and added vigilance over weapon stockpiles.

The fragile state of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at this moment is very worrying, as proliferation of those weapons greatly increases the likelihood of terrorist acquisition. On the immediate horizon is the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. As the three preparatory meetings for the Conference have shown, the NPT is in crisis. The inability even to agree on an agenda or the continuing relevance of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference indicates the diverse perspectives among States parties.

The crisis, however, is far deeper than procedural disagreements. It has to do with the interplay of responsibilities between the Nuclear Weapons States and the non-Nuclear Weapons States. The non-nuclear members of the NPT have a duty not to engage in the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while the nuclear-weapon States have a duty to engage in negotiations leading to the elimination of their nuclear weapons. That was the original bargain of the NPT: non-proliferation in exchange for nuclear disarmament.

As frightening as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their possible acquisition by terrorists are, those issues do not come close to exhausting our disarmament concerns. The spread of conventional weapons, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa, is of extreme concern. The United Nations and its Member States must support all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in Africa and everywhere there is a need for such activities.

In two months, Nairobi will host the First Review Conference of States parties to the anti-personnel landmines Convention, also known as the Nairobi Summit on a mine-free world. From the beginning, the Holy See supported the process of the Ottawa Convention, which has yielded a number of positive results in the fight against anti-personnel mines. Nonetheless, much still needs to be done if humanity is to be set free from those terrible, treacherous devices.

The discussion of the agenda item entitled "Culture of peace" has always taken place in the plenary Assembly rather than in this Committee, even though its importance to disarmament is evident. While the technical proficiency of arms control negotiators and experts is welcome and necessary, my delegation would like to emphasize the larger aspects of education and formation, and thus reiterate its firm commitment.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Mr. Ziping Gu (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): Please allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as the Chairman of the First Committee.

I am pleased to report on the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of the international regime dedicated to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. By putting an end to all nuclear explosions, the Treaty constitutes an effective measure in the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects and therefore contributes to the enhancement of international peace and security as well as to the protection of the environment.

Since its adoption the CTBT has increasingly become universal in its status. As of today, the Treaty has been signed by a total of 173 States and has been ratified by 119 States, including 33 of the 44 States, listed in annex 2 to the Treaty, whose ratification is required for it to enter into force.

I am pleased to note that since October 2003, four States have signed — Eritrea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania — and 14 States have ratified — Bahrain, Belize, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, the Sudan, Togo, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania — including one of the annex 2 States, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To date, 98 States have notified the Preparatory Commission of their designation of National Authorities or national focal points.

The 2004 Joint Ministerial Statement of support for the CTBT, initiated by Australia, Finland, Japan and the Netherlands and adopted on 23 September 2004, is another example demonstrating the support of States for bringing about the entry into force of the CTBT.

The main activities of the Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat are the establishment of the verification regime stipulated by the CTBT and the promotion of understanding and the entry into force of the Treaty.

The establishment of the International Monitoring System (IMS), a worldwide network comprising 321 seismic, radionuclide, hydroacoustic and infrasound monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide laboratories, is steadily progressing. The IMS stations are transmitting raw data to the International Data Centre (IDC) in Vienna through a satellite-based global communications infrastructure, which also connects the IDC with national data centres of States.

On-site inspection, as provided for in the Treaty, is a final verification measure, and the development of the draft operational manual for on-site inspection is a key task of the Preparatory Commission in that area.

The primary purpose of the CTBT is to ensure, globally, an end to nuclear test explosions, thus enhancing national and international security. However, the CTBT verification technologies have the potential to offer important additional benefits derived from IMS data and the activities of the IDC. Seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound data can be used in studies of the Earth's structure and for research on earthquakes, volcanic eruption forecasting, tsunami warning, underwater explosion location and sea temperature and climate change monitoring. For example, in the oceans, an increasing number of icebergs breaking off the Antarctic ice shelves have been observed, a phenomenon probably linked to global warming.

Infrasound data can assist in minimizing the effect of volcanic eruptions on civil aviation and can be used for atmospheric and meteorological studies. The IMS radionuclide network offers opportunities for detecting radionuclide dispersion, monitoring radiation levels, studying natural radioactivity, and engaging in biological research and environmental change investigations.

The Preparatory Commission continues to organize training programmes and workshops to support the enhancement of the national technical capabilities of member States in the implementation of the Treaty. That includes training courses for IMS station operators, NDC managers and technical staff, in areas including data analysis, storage and management, the global communications infrastructure and on-site inspection technologies.

In the field of international cooperation, the Provisional Technical Secretariat continues its role as an information clearing house and provides support for the advancement of the Commission's work, including information visit programmes to support IMS and IDC activities. Voluntary contributions from member States have been received to support those activities.

In 2004, an international cooperation workshop for States from Northern Africa took place in Tunisia. From 29 November to 1 December an international cooperation workshop for States from Southern Africa will be held in South Africa.

Following the adoption by the General Assembly on 15 June 2000 of the Agreement to regulate the relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, our relations and interactions with the United Nations and its programmes, funds and specialized agencies have been developing further and can better contribute to the goals of the United Nations.

In closing, I would like to stress that eight years of developments since its opening for signature have confirmed the growing support and recognition by the international community of the CTBT as an important instrument in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.